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Tuesday, 14 January 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. de La Sablière	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong Ayafor
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299)

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03-20922 (E)

The meeting resumed at 3.15 p.m.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 14 January 2003 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which will be issued as document S/2003/45, and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council being held today, Tuesday, 14 January 2003, on children and armed conflict."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the debate, in accordance with the Council's provisional rules of procedure and with previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Greece. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): As this is my first intervention before the Security Council this year, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency. I would like also to extend my warm congratulations to the representatives of the new members of the Council, namely Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding States — Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia — the countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria and Romania — as well as the European Free Trade Association country of the European Economic Area Iceland align themselves with this statement.

It is a cruel fact that armed conflicts affect a large number of children in many parts of the world. Many of them are uprooted from their homes, maimed or killed. Others are orphaned, abused or exploited. Girls are especially at risk of being subjected to sexual violence during violent conflicts, including rape and enslavement. Children are recruited, trained and forced to kill. Malnutrition among children increases rapidly because of falling food production and displacement. Infant and child mortality rates rise dramatically. Access to schooling is seriously restricted.

This means that the lives of generations of children growing up in conflict-affected areas are hampered in a multitude of ways that hinder their physical, social and emotional growth. We risk losing generations due to conflict. This is not only a human tragedy of immense proportions, it is also a tragedy for the countries concerned. Those children are needed to ensure the continued development of their countries. We must face this challenge and ensure that we act as swiftly as possible.

The European Union was satisfied that Security Council resolution 1379 (2001) clearly reflected the Secretary-General's concise report on children and armed conflict (S/2001/852). The resolution is a valuable example of Council engagement in enhancing the rights of the child.

The European Union calls on all parties to armed conflicts to respect international law relating to the rights and protection of children. Only by concerted international efforts can we ensure improved protection of the rights of the child. We also call on Member States to put an end to impunity for war crimes and other serious crimes perpetrated against children.

Last February, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force. The Optional Protocol constitutes a remarkable step forward in the international community's efforts to put an end to the recruitment of children into armed conflict. The European Union urges States that have not yet done so to ratify and implement the Optional Protocol.

Another important step was the inclusion of a provision in the Statute of the International Criminal Court classifying the enlistment of children as a war crime. That covers both the conscription and enlistment of children under the age of 15 years into any kind of armed force or group and making them participate actively in hostilities. We urge all States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying and fully implementing the Statute.

At the General Assembly special session on children, children told us that they wanted us to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are impatient, and for good reason: an enormous gap exists between the good intentions of international treaties and the real-life conditions of poverty, neglect and involvement in armed conflict. Millions of children worldwide are exploited. In spite of progress in some areas, much remains to be done.

The European Union will seek in all appropriate forums to reinforce international action against recruiting and using children in armed conflict. We will focus on early warning of violations of children's rights, but we will also look at improving monitoring and rehabilitation activities of the United Nations at the regional, bilateral and local levels. Furthermore, we will insist on special protection for girls in armed conflict and on more effective measures to fight impunity.

The European Union wishes to express its support for the work of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. The Office has done impressive work in raising worldwide awareness and mobilizing official and public support for the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

We also recognize the importance of the work carried out by the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is also worth mentioning the United Nations Development Fund for Women and its report entitled "Women, War and Peace". It is essential that the endeavours of those organizations receive adequate support from Member States — although it still remains the responsibility of Member States to implement all obligations flowing from international treaties and instruments.

When discussing last year's resolution, the European Union welcomed the important tasks set out for the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations. We believe that the funds and programmes, as part of their assistance programmes, can contribute significantly to promoting the rights and the protection of children, as well as to ensuring the rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict.

The needs of children in conflict situations are many. At the same time, we should recognize the unimaginable resources that children and young people possess even in the most difficult of circumstances. Apart from being victims, they also have the potential to contribute to reconciliation and conflict resolution.

The European Union wants to welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General, and of the Council itself, to integrate the protection of children into the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping and peace-building operations. Including child protection staff in peacekeeping and peace-building operations is a promising new element. We would welcome a comprehensive assessment of the scope and effectiveness of the response of the United Nations, including recommendations for strengthening, mainstreaming and sustaining activities related to protecting children in armed conflict.

The promotion of peace is the overriding responsibility of all countries, as well as of the Council. But as long as armed conflicts are a reality, we have a duty to promote the protection, as well as to defend the rights, of their most vulnerable victims: the children. The United Nations system as a whole has a strong role to play in this regard, and we owe it to the children of the world to mobilize its full potential.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Bahrain. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Saleh (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I also congratulate your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Colombia, on his presidency of the Council. I would further like to take this opportunity to express to all my best wishes for the new year and my hope that it will bring peace and security to all peoples.

For several years, the Security Council has devoted part of its work to the consideration in public meetings of issues such as the protection of civilians in armed conflict, children and armed conflict and other questions. We welcome that trend in the Council, which allows non-members of the Council to take part in the discussions on such important issues. It enhances transparency in the Council and makes the Council more effective in dealing with international issues, especially those that might threaten international peace and security.

There are two major reasons for focusing attention on children and emphasizing the need to protect them in armed conflict. The first is that children are part of civil society. Accordingly, they must be protected as stipulated by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The second reason is that children are the most vulnerable sector of society and are therefore the sector in greatest need of protection and attention.

Since the beginning of the Council's debate on children and armed conflict, in 1998, the Council has adopted several resolutions and presidential statements on the protection of children in armed conflict, such as resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001). The United Nations, through its various bodies and activities, has helped to strengthen the way in which certain international concerns on the issue of children in armed conflict are addressed, notably by making child protection a component of peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building missions. Despite all this, we still need to try harder to ensure the effective implementation of, and full compliance with, resolutions and international instruments concerning the protection of children.

In that connection, my country would like to express the following concerns. First, when considering humanitarian issues such as the impact of armed conflict on children, we should try to be objective and credible and should try to avoid using double standards. It is absolutely necessary that the Security Council deal with the status of Palestinian children affected by the Israeli occupation of their territories.

Secondly, it might be necessary during future consideration of this item to invite competent bodies such as the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Labour Organization to take part in the Council's deliberations in order to take advantage of their practical experience in this area. In that context, we welcome the participation of Ms. Carol Bellamy and her important statement on the issue.

Thirdly, the Council should consider following up the resolutions it adopts, especially those on the issue now being considered, by adopting methods and means acceptable to members of the Council.

Fourthly, it is also necessary to increase coordination and cooperation among the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. Such coordination would increase the effectiveness of those organs when dealing with this issue of common interest. Coordination among them would prevent duplicating efforts and taking contradictory measures. The Security Council can play an essential role in the protection of children in armed conflict, especially through its peacekeeping missions. Likewise, the Economic and Social Council could play a primary role in post-conflict peace-building. As for the General Assembly, its principal role could be a legislative one, especially through the relevant international conventions and by making recommendations, in particular at its special sessions and other special events.

Finally, we express our hope that the deliberations of the Security Council on children and armed conflict will evolve into a concrete, practical concern and that the Council resolutions will be applied on the ground with objectivity and without double standards. Recruitment of children, their sexual exploitation, the violation of their rights and the impact of foreign occupation on them are all considerations we should take into account in order to help them and to eliminate these phenomena. The Council plays an important role in this regard.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Switzerland. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): May I begin by congratulating France on assuming once again the presidency of the Security Council and wishing you and the new members of the Security Council every success in carrying out the tasks awaiting you.

Switzerland welcomes this annual Security Council debate on children and armed conflict, as it represents one of my country's priorities in matters of human security. Switzerland takes note with satisfaction of the Secretary-General's report (S/2002/1299) and considers it to be a valuable reference document on action undertaken in the United Nations over the last year to respond to challenges with regard to the rights of the child in armed conflicts. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the

Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for their respective presentations.

Switzerland expresses with conviction its solidarity with the recommendations formulated by Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network and is convinced of the Security Council's essential role in their implementation.

Switzerland reiterates its support for the international community's numerous current efforts to reinforce the protection of the civilian population in times of armed conflict. Children are particularly vulnerable, and the impact of conflict on their rights and well-being can be felt at many levels and in various ways: attacks on their rights to survival and development, attacks on their physical integrity, attacks on their rights to education and health, and the destruction of their family structures and of their social and community ties. Far too many of them also find themselves refugees or internally displaced, orphaned or unaccompanied. In the face of such situations, Switzerland particularly recalls the importance of respecting the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their two Additional Protocols of 1977, in which specific provisions for the protection of and assistance to children are incorporated.

As underlined in the Secretary-General's report, 2002 saw the entry into force of two major international instruments: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, and the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Switzerland, which ratified the Optional Protocol last June, is committed to pursuing its efforts with a view to ensuring its universal ratification as soon as possible. It hopes that all States that have not yet done this will follow its example by depositing a declaration, as stipulated in paragraph 2 of article 3, indicating 18 years as the age limit for voluntary recruitment.

The entry into force of the Rome Statute represents a major step towards an end to impunity. Switzerland welcomes the steps taken by the Secretary-General's Special Representative to ensure that the International Criminal Court, as well as the Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone, include particular considerations regarding juvenile law into their regulations and procedure.

Switzerland shares the Secretary-General's opinion that the current major challenge resides in the implementation of these international instruments, which, by the standards they set, propose new prospects for action. In this respect, it would have been desirable for the report to formulate suggestions for concrete actions to be taken by the Security Council itself as well as by the United Nations system as a whole, and by each of its Member States individually.

Switzerland emphasizes the innovative and welcome contribution that resolution 1379 (2001) represents, particularly the establishment of a list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use children in violation of the international provisions meant to protect them. The political importance of this list is undeniable, and it should certainly be maintained. However, its true value will become apparent only when the Security Council has defined the actions it plans to undertake in this respect.

In this regard, Switzerland invites the Security Council to consider the following recommendations. We suggest that this list be updated on a regular basis. Include in the list all countries and situations of armed conflict which involve the problem of recruitment and use of child soldiers and which appear on the Security Council's agenda. Include on the list all other countries and conflict situations which the Council may deem necessary. Establish an ongoing dialogue with those Governments named in the list and promote the relevant instruments among the armed non-State actors. Identify other criteria, in addition to the recruitment and use of children, for developing the list, keeping in mind the magnitude of the impact of armed conflicts on children. At the conceptual level, the work accomplished by non-governmental organizations on this matter could constitute a particularly valuable contribution.

To conclude, I wish to recall the commitments made by the international community in the document "A world fit for children", adopted at the General Assembly's special session on children (resolution S-27/2). In this regard, Switzerland supports the activities to create awareness and to integrate children's rights in United Nations activities as a whole and encourages the Organization to pursue and intensify them at all levels. My country welcomes the implementation of guiding principles for conduct for all United Nations staff, which are essential to ensuring that the behaviour of humanitarian personnel vis-à-vis

its beneficiaries is beyond reproach, and to prevent abuse. We further invite the Security Council to continue including child protection advisers in its peacekeeping operations. They play a key role in ensuring that the rights and specific needs of girls and boys be taken into account and respected.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Switzerland for the kind words addressed to my country.

Mr. Laurin (Canada) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I should like to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict.

(*spoke in English*)

Given the present international context, and as we approach the one-year anniversary of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, we are reminded that this is highly relevant work for the Security Council.

I wish to begin by expressing my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his substantive report (S/2002/1299). In particular, we were pleased to see specific conflict situations mentioned in the report as well as in the annex. What is clear is that, while progress has been made, the work of the Council is far from complete. Ongoing child abduction, conscription and the use of children in armed conflict make the work of the Security Council all the more urgent.

We welcome the Security Council's acting as a channel for Member States to receive information about the impact of conflict on children, and we would urge the Council in future to call for recommendations for effective solutions to prevent the recruitment and end the use of child soldiers. It is incumbent on us to move away from general statements to specific action and to build a system of accountability that cannot be ignored. Now that Governments and armed groups using children in armed conflict have been publicly named, the challenge to the Security Council is to make these parties accountable. This requires genuine political will and resources. I congratulate the Secretary-General for highlighting this reality in his report.

I would like also to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, as well as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other United Nations agencies, for their efforts in developing mechanisms for integrating child protection into the peace and security agenda. I would like to pay special tribute to the critical work of civil society. We must continue to collaborate with those organizations that are on the front line of efforts to ensure effective monitoring and to meet the protection and assistance needs of war-affected children and their communities.

In particular, Canada welcomed the report of the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict in November of last year, funded in part by the Canadian Human Security Programme. That report illustrates clearly how much work still needs to be done with respect to monitoring, reporting and follow-up action before, during and after armed conflict.

It goes without saying that Canada associates itself fully with the statement that the representative of Austria will make on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Canada made commitments at the Winnipeg Conference, and we fully intend to respect them. For example, the Canadian International Development Agency has committed $122 million to child protection programmes and $2 million to child protection research, including several projects on war-affected children. Through our Human Security Programme, we sponsor youth outreach and education initiatives through War Child Canada, an organization that provides humanitarian assistance to war-affected children.

We believe that the efforts of Canada and of others have helped turn the corner on monitoring and reporting. Now we would like to see action taken when the evidence is persuasive, as it is in the Secretary-General's report.

To this end, Canada calls on the Security Council to undertake field missions in the specific conflict situations mentioned in the Secretary-General's report and in particular closely to scrutinize the action of the parties identified in the list annexed to the report. Such field missions should include consultations with local NGOs, women's organizations, youth groups and children. The Security Council should ask for a six-month interim report, evaluate progress made on these situations, and commit itself to follow up in one year's time on the parties named in this year's discussion. Ultimately, if there is no real progress, the Security

Council must consider what actions it must take to give effect to its decisions, including targeted sanctions. At present, only countries on the Security Council's agenda are mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. This was a first step — one that should be followed by the inclusion of all conflicts in future reports.

For the sake of the children who are the victims of such crimes, Canada believes this debate should be made an annual event. Recommendations from relevant resolutions, namely 1379 (2001), 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000), should be assessed. In addition, Council accountability for specific actions to enhance protection and assistance for girls and boys affected by armed conflict and their communities could be reinforced.

The issue of children and armed conflict is linked to the broader agenda item on protection of civilians recently debated by the Council. The Security Council and the broader United Nations system in its entirety must ensure that these agenda items remain linked.

Although Council members agreed to consider the protection of civilians, including the rights and needs of children, in country-specific reports and resolutions, it would appear to us that this has not been done in every case. We call for renewed efforts towards this end.

(*spoke in French*)

Discussions on small arms, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and access should address directly the implications for children and should pay special attention to the situation of the girl child. One promising outcome of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was its recognition of the impact of small arms on children. While this represents progress, children continue to fall victim to the ravages caused by the proliferation and reckless use of small arms.

We commend the Economic Community of West African States for having launched its child protection unit within its secretariat. That is a very important initiative that we hope will serve as a model for other regional organizations in the integration of child protection into their work.

We encourage United Nations agencies to continue their efforts to improve training on children's rights for United Nations staff and to evaluate lessons learned from incorporating child protection into peacekeeping operations. We believe that the six core principles of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises should be incorporated into the mandate of all peacekeeping operations, including the prohibition of sexual activity with children. In addition, HIV/AIDS education and HIV testing and counselling services should be offered to all United Nations peacekeepers.

Impunity, humanitarian access and physical protection, with specific consideration of sexual exploitation, all are urgent issues that remain unresolved, although they fall squarely within the Council's purview and should be addressed. Canadian representatives were pleased that very serious crimes committed against children, including the use of child soldiers to participate actively in hostilities, were included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). This was a significant development in international law to protect children from the devastating effects of armed conflict.

The ICC is an important additional international mechanism to protect children's rights. We call on those States that have not yet done so to ratify or to accede to the ICC Statute. All States should welcome the fact that the ICC will contribute to ending impunity for serious crimes against children.

In the outcome document of the special session on children, held in May 2002, States renewed their commitment to strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict. The Security Council has a key role to play in ensuring that that commitment is translated into action.

Canada firmly believes that all our actions must be guided by the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which remains the principal instrument of reference and, indeed, the fundamental legislative basis for achieving children's rights. The primacy of the Convention needs to be strongly reflected in our words and actions aimed at improving the lives of children. The three landmark Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict — 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001) — have outlined steps to be taken, actors to be engaged and mechanisms required to increase the protection of the rights of war-affected children and their communities.

Progress has been made, but much more needs to be done. The Security Council has a key role to play. War-affected children have the right to expect that the Council will do its part to the fullest extent possible.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of the Philippines. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Manalo (Philippines): At the outset, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and your country on your chairmanship and leadership of the Council this month. I also wish to express my delegation's appreciation for this opportunity to speak on this important topic and to thank the Secretary-General for his report on this very important issue. We join others today in underscoring the need for continued and concerted actions at both the national and international levels to protect children in armed conflict. We thank the Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their respective statements this morning.

It is estimated that there are 300,000 child soldiers in the world, one fourth of whom are in the East Asia and Pacific region. Most of these children were forcibly recruited because of social and cultural pressures or were simply abducted outright. Poverty has also been a factor leading to child recruitment. Those not recruited or abducted have also been victims of displacement due to armed conflict.

Instead of being in school, these children have served in the battleground, fighting, or as messengers and couriers, as cooks, spies or sex slaves. That these children have been and are involved in wars, growing up in an environment of destruction, denies the world a promising future.

One of the most important milestones for protecting children from involvement in hostilities was set last February with the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It was indeed a positive step, a major step, and will hopefully end the use of children under 18 years old from serving as soldiers or directly participating in hostilities.

The Philippines ratified the Optional Protocol last April, and it has also ratified the 1990 International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. We view these two international instruments as setting strict standards for preventing the recruitment of children as child soldiers.

Children are also protected by the Philippines legal framework. Our Constitution provides that the State shall defend the rights of children and especially protect them from all forms of neglect, abuse and other conditions prejudicial to their development. In this regard, Philippines law provides that children shall not be recruited for fighting and that they should be given priority during evacuation as a result of armed conflict. In recognition of their special situation, children arrested for reasons related to armed conflict, whether as combatants, couriers, guides or spies, are entitled to release on recognizance within 24 hours to the custody of the Government or any responsible member of the community as determined by the courts.

We welcome the fact that the Security Council has taken steps to address the matter of protection of and assistance to children in situations of armed conflict, particularly through resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001). The Council must continue to be seized with this issue and take every opportunity to reaffirm its collective commitment to protect children and prevent their involvement in armed conflict by mainstreaming this concern in its relevant decisions.

Post-conflict reconstruction programmes must also be tailored to assist children affected by armed conflict. In the case of girls and young women, who are often the targets of sexual abuse, abduction and forced recruitment, rehabilitation services are needed to deal with their experiences and assist them in reintegrating society. In the case of displaced children, aside from basic food, medical care and education, counselling and family reunification must be important components of their reintegration programme.

For countries that have emerged from conflict, it is important that any disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme include the demobilization and rehabilitation of former child soldiers. Such programmes must distinguish the post-conflict needs of girl soldiers from those of their male counterparts. This will ensure that the provisions for demobilization and reintegration needs are directly related to the specific

ways that children have been abused or traumatized during a conflict.

The healing and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict should be a priority of any reconstruction effort and, as such, must be backed by sufficient resources. This is especially due to the necessity of finding alternative peaceful ways for children to develop and have a more meaningful future.

Children are our future. We must all help to create a world fit for them. At the very least, we must protect them from the horrors of armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Monaco. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Boisson (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): I am particularly pleased to see you, Sir, in the Security Council presidency this month, and to congratulate you.

Once again, we come to the Security Council to plead a cause which affects the human being in his very nature, as well as in his future. The recruitment of children in armed conflicts is an intolerable and unacceptable violation of the rights of the child, a violation clearly condemned by the universal morality to which the States of our Organization adhere.

Like many heads of delegation, the Chairman of the delegation of Monaco to the special session of the General Assembly on children, His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, last May referred to this painful issue, which, naturally and quite wisely, was fortunately taken into account in the very important final declaration adopted on that occasion.

The Secretary-General's report of 26 November 2002 (S/2002/1299) had already alerted us to the difficulties which the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, had encountered in carrying out his lofty mission, but also, we are pleased to see, to the undeniable progress achieved, which is extremely encouraging.

This public meeting of the Security Council, in this first month of the year 2003, under the French presidency, of which we appreciate both the initiative and quality, gives us the opportunity to express our unreserved support for the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, and the opportunity to encourage them to continue and strengthen their action in favour of this noble cause.

As the principal organ under the United Nations Charter with responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council indeed urges us to undertake some soul-searching that should lead us to take decisive decisions in order to put an end to the painful situation of child soldiers. These are tragic and pathetic situations that, beyond the emotions they give rise to, undermine the principles of humanity on which our cooperation is built and on which rest our hopes and our deepest convictions.

Using children as a tool of war, of suffering and death, is intolerable. This idea revolts and disturbs us. As a crime against children, a crime of genocide, a war crime, a crime against humanity, the use of children in armed conflicts makes it incumbent on the international community and the Security Council, which is its authorized voice, to embark on a new stage. The report of the Secretary-General and his message today, and the message that his Special Representative has just given us, as well as that of Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, emphasize the urgency and need for action.

The Principality of Monaco, on the initiative of both its highest sovereign authorities and its people, has consistently put the protection of childhood, physical as well as moral, at the forefront of its concerns and national and international commitments. The public authorities have devoted many efforts to this. Many non-governmental organizations, with the support of the royal family, the Government and the parliament, are also making unflagging efforts to contribute to the protection of children in danger and the improvement of their plight, particularly when it is affected by poverty, violence and a destructive lack of a future.

An international law symposium, which will be followed by a public meeting with civil society, is now being prepared in Monaco on the initiative of the World Association of Friends of Children (AMADE).

Effectively headed by Crown Prince Albert, who since May 1993 has chaired the Monaco delegation at the General Assembly sessions, and by Her Royal Highness Princess Caroline of Hanover, this initiative should make possible a better grasp of the concepts and the legal contexts involved nationally and internationally in the protection of children, as well as

the ways of facilitating legal proceedings and strengthening sanctions in the case of serious, flagrant and repeated violations of their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. The symposium should contribute to increasing awareness, which is needed now more than ever on the global level, of this serious issue, given that we now have today — with the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the two Optional Protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child — indispensable specific instruments to combat this ultimate form of barbarism that affects children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as its Optional Protocol on children in armed conflict — which the Principality has signed and ratified — and the very valuable experience gained by the international criminal tribunals will indeed be the basis for this exercise in reflection, as will the role of the International Criminal Court, which is awaited with great hope.

This will involve, without academic disputes, trying to determine, in a realistic way, the most efficient legal and judicial ways and means to allow for prosecuting, beyond time and space, the most serious crimes against children.

The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict will also be, of course, at the heart of the symposium and the meeting with civil society. The Monaco authorities, which have contributed to the special fund for children involved in armed conflict since its inception, pay due tribute to the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in this area. They greatly welcome the provisions that he advocates, given that they are without a doubt a decisive stage in the protection of children during armed conflict, internal as well as international, and regardless of the parties involved. In particular, we note with satisfaction the list of parties involved in conflicts contained in the report's annex — parties against which there is proof that they continue to recruit and arm minors and use them without restraint or caution in situations of extremely brutal hostilities.

The resolution to be adopted at the initiative of France at the end of this exchange of views should grant all the necessary legitimacy and authority to its provisions to follow up specifically on the previous Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001).

Defining as a war crime by the Statute of the International Criminal Court of forced recruitment of children under the age of 15 in hostilities, including in internal conflicts, as well as attacks on hospitals and schools, or serious, repeated sexual violent acts, should help us. This definition is decisive insofar as the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, of 26 November 1968, explicitly stipulates in article I that war crimes and crimes against humanity are without statutory limitation, like genocide, which the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, of 9 December 1948, considers as a crime against the rights of nations, jus gentium, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war.

I would recall furthermore that article VI of the Convention on genocide had already provided for an international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction over such crimes, and article VII stipulated that such crimes would not be considered political for the purpose of extradition, which would also be agreed by the contracting parties in accordance with their laws and treaties in force. Article II (e) of this same instrument also considers — and this is noteworthy — that genocide also extends to an act of forced transfer of children from one national, ethnic, racial or religious group to another, committed with intent to destroy them.

Today, as the Secretary-General stated in his report, the true challenge lies in the implementation and the effective application of existing international instruments and norms. However, it is undeniable and encouraging to note, undoubtedly for the first time in such a report, references to Governments, paramilitary organizations and armed groups that are guilty of kidnapping children and training them, despite their will, to become war criminals, murderers and torturers. We now know the perpetrators of these crimes, or at least some among them. We have the legal means to prosecute and punish them. Without a doubt, we must see to it that there is the political will to act and find the financial and law enforcement resources to intervene effectively.

Undoubtedly also, we must strengthen the programmes for reinsertion of child soldiers and develop new ones, while seeing to it that these programmes become integral elements of any post-conflict reconstruction and development projects. The appointment of advisers in certain of the programmes

under way seems to be bearing fruit and therefore is an interesting path to pursue and encourage. As the Secretary-General has also recalled, the creation during armed conflicts of protected zones in which women, children, the elderly, the wounded and the disarmed can find asylum and protection is one solution to impose. It is a solution that the highest authorities in Monaco have always wished to see encouraged and promoted by the United Nations. Such zones should benefit from secure access routes to allow for the intervention of humanitarian personnel.

Ahmadou Kouroma, who has recounted his adventures as a child soldier in a very beautiful novel that received several literary prizes, clearly shows that reinsertion is always possible and often crowned with success. For, as this author wrote of his mother, "after 30 years of suffering, smoke and tears, there was still something marvellous in the hollows of her face".

The moving observation by this child, a criminal despite himself who found again his place in human society, should lead us to be optimistic and give us, with hope, the will to act that naturally follows from this.

In that spirit of optimism and hope, we must have the courage of our convictions and take the necessary decisions in order to ensure that the recommendations of the Secretary-General are effectively followed up and his expectations fulfilled.

The clear and unambiguous desire of the Government of the Principality is quite clear in this regard: justice must be done, and international law, which deals with this question extensively and in detail, must triumph so that the murderers of children are punished for their crime — the worst crime of all: turning children into criminals and transforming their innocence into barbarism.

Here, we believe that there are three crucial elements. First, when internal judicial proceedings have been exhausted, or in cases where such proceedings have not been used, the competence of international bodies, in particular the International Criminal Court, should naturally come into play.

Secondly, crimes and violations against girls and boys of less than 15 years of age should not be excluded from the criminal definitions contained in the Statute of the International Criminal Court as they relate to the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, under articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Statute respectively.

Thirdly, it should be possible to apply, without reservation, the principles of the Convention on the Non-Applicability of the Statute of Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity of 26 November 1968, as well as, when justified, those of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Rwanda. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Muvunyi (Rwanda): We would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January and to extend our congratulations to the representatives of the new members of the Security Council — Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain. My delegation also wishes all the members of the Security Council a happy and prosperous new year for 2003.

The delegation of Rwanda welcomes this open debate on the sensitive issue of children and armed conflict. As a country emerging from genocide, Rwanda has a wide experience to share on this important topic of children and armed conflict. In Rwanda, children were killed by *génocidaires*, and survivors were traumatized by the violence, which left orphans in its wake. Rwanda believes that all children must go to school and that they must never again be involved in armed conflict. In the 1994 Rwanda genocide, children under 10 years old were used by *génocidaires* to hunt and to kill fellow children, adults and rape victims of the *génocidaires*. After the tragedy, children suspected of genocide were arrested, imprisoned in special prisons and re-educated.

I would like to announce that this coming Friday, child suspects in prison will be released in accordance with the statement made by His Excellency President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda on the release of 40,000 suspects of genocide.

Rwanda is totally committed to the protection of children and does not tolerate the abuse of children under any circumstances.

The Rwandan delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict,

document S/2002/1299. Rwanda hopes that action will be taken. We fully agree with the statement made by the Secretary-General in the Security Council this meeting.

We believe that sufficient funds must be spent on the education of children for development, instead of diverting financial resources to the destruction of human beings. Children are the hope of tomorrow; that is why special attention should be given to our young children. Let us lead children to school and not to armed conflict. Let us take them school and ensure that there is follow-up so that they acquire appropriate skills, knowledge, education and discipline as future leaders of the world. The recruitment of children in armed conflict must be halted at all costs as a matter of urgency. Children must be able to grow in an environment of peace, and should never be involved in any armed conflict. That is why the Rwandan delegation condemns armed groups which enlist children under 18 years of age. It is dangerous to indoctrinate children with the ideologies of hatred and genocide with the final objective using them in fighting useless wars without a cause.

Why use children in conflicts? As we know, children naturally obey orders, even negative ones, such as the order to kill innocent people. Children will carry out any order in good faith because they do not differentiate between evil and the best things. The irrational warlords must understand why young children should not be brainwashed and become hostages of conflict. It is totally unacceptable to abuse children, and the Security Council must take a firm decision to reverse the current situation prevailing in some States Members of the United Nations. We call upon the Security Council and the international community to condemn the armed groups of the former Rwandan Army (ex-FAR) forces and Interahamwe, the Parti pour la liberation du peuple hutu, the Front pour la défense de la démocratie, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie, the Mai-Mai and others mentioned in the annex of the report of the Secretary-General as currently using child soldiers in the Great Lakes region.

My statement would be incomplete if I did not condemn those who rape children — as well as those who rape adults. Rape is one of the weapons used in armed conflicts, and children committed rape and were raped during the Rwanda genocide of 1994. According to Rwandese law covering acts of genocide, adults who committed rape during the genocide are in the first category of *génocidaires*, who are given the death penalty. Infanticide must also be punished by the death penalty if we are to halt this crisis imposed on children.

Let me emphasize that young children are the potential resources that can lift this world out of poverty and injustice and attain irreversible progress in accordance with the United Nations objective of achieving sustainable development. Children must therefore be freed from disease, hunger, slavery, corruption and conflict of all types. They must grow in an environment of love, peace and justice, with a thirst for appropriate knowledge and the skills to develop themselves. The whole world would thus harvest the fruits of such well-guided children. Those who are today involved in armed conflict must be demobilized without delay, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) must put in place strategies and procedures and must provide the means for their implementation. Let the Security Council join hands with UNICEF as the saviour of the children of States Members of the United Nations. Investing in the education of young souls is the priority of priorities.

The authorities of the Republic of Rwanda are grateful to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, and to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for their assistance to Rwanda orphans and to the many children who after the genocide prematurely became leaders of families of other children. Rwanda has a clear vision: to invest in those children in order to achieve irreversible development.

Finally, Rwanda requests and recommends that the President of the Security Council declare a universal ceasefire in favour of children in order to withdraw them from armed conflicts. This is not a favour, but a fundamental right for children who are caught up in armed conflict and who are held hostage in some areas of conflict. They must be handed over to UNICEF. Even liberation movements must transfer children to liberated areas or demilitarized zones. In the case of displaced persons, Governments, non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross and United Nations agencies must attach special importance to the welfare of children by providing them with appropriate feeding, vaccination, medicines and schooling. Demobilized children must go back to formal schooling and should be motivated by UNICEF, the

United Nations Development Programme and international financial institutions. Failure to save the lives of children condemns the whole world to misery and long-term social injustice.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ukraine. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): I would like to begin, Sir, by expressing appreciation for the manner in which you are presiding over the work of the Security Council and by taking this opportunity to welcome you as the Permanent Representative of France. I am confident that your profound experience and excellent diplomatic skills will contribute greatly to the Council's activities and to the United Nations as a whole.

Let me also thank you and the delegation of France for convening this important meeting. Ukraine believes that the practice of holding Security Council open debates on children and armed conflict is a clear manifestation of the great significance of this issue. Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001) became a strong basis for advocacy on behalf of war-affected children. Various references to this issue have been made in a large number of other Security Council resolutions, presidential statements, briefings and open debates. All this testifies to the Council's involvement in this important matter and to the fact that the protection of children is a priority concern in the area of peace and security.

We are pleased with the considerable progress made lately in the field of protection of children affected by armed conflict. The entry into force of two international instruments — the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statue of the International Criminal Court (ICC) — which qualify crimes against children as war crimes, has become a milestone in strengthening and developing worldwide standards for the protection of children.

I would like to express appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on this issue (S/2002/1299). For the first time, the report contains a list of parties to conflicts that continue to recruit and use children. Some 300,000 boys and girls are currently being exploited as child soldiers around the world. In our view, the publication of this list is yet another important step forward in our efforts to put an end to the impunity of those who disregard the rights of war-affected children.

But it may not be enough just to condemn or prohibit the recruitment of children. We need to ask ourselves: why do children join armies? If we are to prevent children from participating in the fighting, we need to understand specifically the causes that force children to become soldiers.

Ukraine welcomes the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Otunnu, and his Office aimed at creating, in cooperation with the Secretariat and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), guidelines for United Nations peacekeeping personnel to ensure that children's rights and needs are given proper attention and response during the peacemaking process.

Peacekeeping missions have a crucial role to play in providing protection to children. In order to implement this particular dimension of their mandate, a child protection adviser should be responsible for coordinating activities to ensure the protection and welfare of children. We are especially appreciative of the fact that the first advisers of this kind have already been deployed in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, recently, in Angola.

Despite the progress achieved so far, much remains to be done to ensure the effective protection and rehabilitation of children in times of war. We should not forget the alarming fact that during the last decade of the past century the world lost some 2 million of its youngest lives as a direct result of armed conflicts. Another 6 million were injured, and over more than 10 million were traumatized. Today, more than 20 million children have been displaced within or outside their countries due to war. Every month, nearly 800 children are killed or crippled by landmines.

There is no doubt that the effective monitoring of adherence to the provisions of international law and the consequent obligations, as well as to the commitments pledged by parties to conflict, are essential actions for ensuring the protection of children and their rights. In that regard, it is important to continue to include observations concerning the protection of children in reports to the Security Council on specific conflict situations.

When designing peacekeeping operations, the Security Council, in our view, should make every effort to protect both children and their supportive environment: schools, hospitals, health centres and religious institutions. Ukraine strongly endorses the concept of children and their protective and nurturing institutions being considered as zones of peace. It is important also to focus on children in post-conflict reconciliation programmes. There is an urgent need for the international community to support programmes, including advocacy and social services, for the demobilization of child soldiers and their reintegration into the community. Such children should be offered new experiences that will change their identity from that of soldiers. Education and training remain fundamental to that end. In our view, more attention should also be given to greater involvement by women in peacekeeping missions. We believe that that would help to enhance the capacity of missions in terms of protecting girl children and dealing with gender-sensitive aspects.

Finally, I wish to stress that the Secretary-General's report sets out an important agenda and a basis for future work by the Council and by other United Nations bodies. Ukraine looks forward to further progress in that direction and is prepared to contribute specifically to the subsequent consideration of the issue of children and armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Atta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the Egyptian delegation, I should like to tell you, Sir, how grateful we are to your friendly country and to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We should also like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for their tireless efforts and valuable contributions aimed at enhancing and protecting the rights of children in armed conflict, and we reaffirm our total support for those efforts.

During the past two years, the Security Council has devoted considerable attention to children in armed conflict, playing its role in that sphere by taking decisions related to peace-building and peacekeeping operations and by asking the parties to conflict to respect international law, in particular with regard to the protection of children. That is commendable, and complements the General Assembly's primary responsibility for children's issues. In that connection, I should like to express our gratitude to Mr. Olara Otunnu for his efforts and to draw attention to the importance of his field visits to raise awareness, to promote and to strengthen the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict. In his report (S/2002/1299), the Secretary-General says that Mr. Otunnu's visits had helped in the assessment of the situation of children in armed conflict, in making specific recommendations and in heightening the international community's awareness of the problems faced by children.

In that regard, we reiterate our demand that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General visit children living under Israeli occupation in the occupied Palestinian territories and prepare a report on effective measures to help protect those children in implementation of the relevant provisions of the outcome of the General Assembly's May 2002 special session on children, as cited by the Assembly on 18 December 2002 in its resolution 57/190. Palestinian children are not only suffering from occupation, with its devastating psychological consequences; they are also deprived of their fundamental rights, including the right to live in security in a stable family environment. Not only are their families deprived of shelter and work, their lives are threatened if they ask for their legitimate fundamental rights.

The suffering of Palestinian children does not stop there: they are deprived of a future, because they are given no tools to improve their future. Palestinian schools have been closed, and Palestinian children cannot continue their studies because of the constraints that have been imposed on them. The Secretary-General has stated that the cordoning off of the territories, the curfews, the barriers and the checkpoints give rise to humanitarian problems, which result in the deterioration of education. The suffering of Palestinian children has exceeded all limits: unless the situation improves, there is no hope for the short-term future.

Therefore, Egypt urges all countries to help Palestinian children by ensuring their humanitarian and other basic needs. We invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to undertake a field visit to the region in order to raise awareness of the situation on the ground and to enable the international

community to adopt effective necessary measures aimed at relieving the suffering of Palestinian children and ensuring their protection.

Egypt supports all national and international efforts in the area of protecting the rights of children and improving their situation. We are firmly convinced that the economic, social, political and cultural progress of any society depends on the overall physical, moral, mental and educational development of its children. Over the past decade, the international community has undertaken many commendable efforts and has made great achievements in that area. Despite the success of the World Summit on Children, held in 1990, and the setting of ambitious goals to help children, the world still witnesses a number of factors that have had a negative impact on children, such as the economic effects of debt, illness and epidemics. Recent years have witnessed a prevalence of armed conflict, a lack of respect for international law — especially international humanitarian law — and various violations of the rights of civilians. Hence, the problem of children in armed conflict — despite efforts to prevent their recruitment and to ensure their demobilization and reunification with their families, their protection from systematic violence and their psychological reintegration into their homes and communities. The Secretary-General's innovation in his report — the list of parties to conflict that are violating children's rights — is a commendable initiative that should be studied with a view to taking the necessary actions to track down those who violate the rights of children and bring them to justice. Within the framework of our commitment to work with the international community on issues pertaining to children in armed conflict, we urge that children be enabled to live in security and stability.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Austria. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria): I have the honour to speak in Austria's capacity as current Chair of the Human Security Network, an interregional group of countries that also comprises Canada, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, the Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Switzerland and Thailand, and South Africa as an observer.

Ever since the creation of the Human Security Network, in 1999, the issue of children affected by armed conflict has been of critical importance to our agenda. The Network and its individual members have witnessed the origin of several important initiatives, such as the Agenda for War-Affected Children, adopted at the Winnipeg Conference in September 2000; the holding of workshops on the issue of ending the use of child soldiers in Jordan; and the programmes of the Centre for Children Traumatized by Armed Conflicts in South-Eastern Europe, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to name but a few.

Austria made children and armed conflict one of the top priorities during its period in the chairmanship of the Network. At its next ministerial meeting in May this year in Graz, the Human Security Network is expected to adopt a common support strategy for children affected by armed conflict, identifying a set of operative principles as well as a training curriculum for child-rights monitors and rehabilitation experts. One of the results envisaged is that the Network will contribute to establishing a pool of child experts for eventual use in conflict areas.

In November 2002, the Human Security Network supported the holding here in New York of an international symposium on children affected by armed conflict. The event was organized by the Harvard Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, in cooperation with the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, the Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Children's Fund and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The symposium focused on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1379 (2001) and came up with a set of concrete recommendations, which have been communicated to the members of the Council.

Let me now touch upon the politically significant report of the Secretary-General before us. We strongly support the general thrust of this report and I would like to highlight a few of its aspects.

It is indeed astonishing how the normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict has been strengthened during the recent past. In less than a month, we will celebrate the first anniversary of the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on children in armed conflict.

While progress with regard to the normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict is certainly remarkable, I would like to reinforce the call made by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to focus now on application. There is an essential role for the United Nations system in ensuring better implementation of the relevant standards, in the first place through an enhanced operationalization of activities in the field. Austria and the Office of the Special Representative are currently working together on a compendium containing all relevant international standards, which will be published shortly and is supposed to improve the understanding and knowledge of those dealing with children in armed conflict.

Let me now come to the much anticipated list requested by Security Council resolution 1379 (2001). The Human Security Network welcomes the list annexed to the report, as well as the description in the report of further situations of concern, which could not be added to the list due to formal reasons. This list is without doubt a major and politically significant contribution to raising awareness about the plight of children affected by armed conflict around the world and to eventually ending the recruitment of child soldiers. It also clearly demonstrates that the international community is no longer willing to close its eyes before one of the biggest tragedies we are facing today.

While the annexed list candidly names 23 parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers and meet the other criteria set out in resolution 1379 (2001), it is, however, obvious that it excludes large numbers of children equally affected by armed conflict. We therefore believe that the list needs to be extended. It should encompass all other situations where children are recruited or used as soldiers or where their protection needs are severely threatened in other ways. As an example, I would like to direct members' attention to one situation which is particularly alarming: the ongoing abduction of numerous boys and girls in northern Uganda. Based on reports from a variety of sources, we have reason to believe that large numbers of children are still being abducted and held by the Lord's Resistance Army for use in combat or as sex slaves. The Human Security Network is currently evaluating possible action to shed more light on this situation and to put a halt to this abominable practice. At the same time, we feel that it is necessary also for the Security Council to be able to better assess such situations.

The Human Security Network has concrete recommendations to present to the Council which, in our view, would significantly increase the ability of this forum to address the issue of children and armed conflict and will have an impact on the lives of war-affected children. The 10 recommendations can be summarized as follows.

We should continue the consideration of the issue of children and armed conflict on a regular basis and adopt new resolutions adding value to the debate.

We should create an effective evaluation mechanism for the list of parties to conflict recruiting or using child soldiers and the relevant steps taken by those on it. This could include field visits. The involvement of international agencies and non-governmental organizations in this process is crucial.

The Secretary-General should be requested to regularly update this list and consider extending it by also including conflict situations not on the Council's agenda, as well as other severe violations of relevant child-protection obligations, such as abductions or the use of landmines.

We should enter into a dialogue with the Governments of countries on the list, ask them to report on the respective situations and urge them to put an immediate end to the recruitment or use of child soldiers, to reintegrate them into society and to stop all other severe violations of child-protection obligations. We must also raise awareness among all parties concerned, including non-State actors, of their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian, human rights, refugee and criminal law.

We should ensure that the issue of children affected by armed conflict is also taken up under other agenda items of the Council, in particular when considering resolutions on specific conflict situations or when planning Security Council missions. According to a study by the Watchlist, only 9 out of 75 country-specific Security Council resolutions adopted between August 2000 and October 2002 included references to children and armed conflict.

Attention must also be paid to the need for all peace processes, all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, and all justice and reconciliation mechanisms to be child-conscious and

for boys and girls to be fully involved in order to make sure that their voices are heard.

The child-focused expertise in these processes should be increased and the training of peacekeeping, civilian police and humanitarian personnel on child protection standards promoted. Each peacekeeping operation should include at least one child protection expert. The establishment of rosters of qualified experts available should be encouraged.

We should give higher priority to the issues of violence against, trafficking in and exploitation of children, in particular girls, and to the prevention of infectious and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, and request the provision of adequate assistance to the children affected.

The Human Security Network also suggests that efforts be made to ensure safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for children in emergencies, with emphasis on particularly vulnerable groups such as displaced and separated children.

Finally, the Network suggests improving the exchange of information with non-members, international agencies and NGOs on the issue of children affected by armed conflict and the establishment a focal point for that purpose.

In conclusion, let me assure the Council that the members of the Human Security Network remain fully committed to enhancing the protection of children in armed conflict. This is indeed an urgent matter pertaining to our common values and our conscience as human beings.

The President (*spoke in French*): I would like to inform the Council that there are 17 speakers remaining on my list. I intend, with the cooperation of the participants, to exhaust the entire list this afternoon.

The next speaker is the representative of Nepal. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sharma (Nepal): I wish to begin by extending to you, Mr. President, and the other members of the Security Council warm, although belated, wishes for a happy new year. Let me also say how delighted my delegation is to see you so ably presiding over the Council.

Children, the weakest sector of a population, suffer in many ways in situations of armed conflict. They lose their parents and other loved ones. They lose their homes and livelihoods. They lose basic services such as education and health. And they even lose their lives. Those who survive are often forced to live in camps and or in confinement as refugees or displaced persons and become susceptible to exploitation and temptations.

The most horrendous crime that the parties to a deadly conflict commit is to use child soldiers. This robs children of their childhood and innocence and places them in a world of murder and mayhem. Traumatized and stigmatized, such children have difficulty coping with normal life and blossoming to their full potential.

We have internationally agreed safeguards for the protection of children, but they remain ineffective in delivering results. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relevant Optional Protocol, Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions and Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) set basic international standards for the protection of children. They are complemented by a number of other compacts, conventions and resolutions. The International Criminal Court is certainly another potent instrument to protect children in armed conflict.

Despite those provisions, children continue to face misery, exploitation and death in conflicts. The world community faces a daunting challenge: to stringently enforce those provisions. Part of the problem is due to the fact that world community has been incoherent in its response to conflict. Political considerations get in the way of devising a cogent and seamless set of actions. More often than not, funding has failed international compacts, whose vision loses focus along the trail of implementation.

Critical is the imperative to ensure that the perpetrators of violence against children do not go unpunished. Crimes against children should not only be excluded from amnesty; they should also carry heavier punishments. Special measures, including punishment, are essential to protect girl children. The nature of, and potential damage from, a conflict should determine the priority and extent of the international community's response.

Clearing landmines should be undertaken with a sense of urgency, and should receive adequate funding.

Resolute political will must be demonstrated to ensure effective control of small arms, which maim and kill most children. Collective efforts should be strengthened to prevent fuelling conflicts with proceeds from the exploitation of natural resources, drug trafficking and other criminal activities.

Juvenile justice should constitute an important part of domestic courts and of international tribunals and courts to try child soldiers who might have committed grave crimes. A comprehensive programme should be put in place to demobilize child soldiers, as well as to give them skills and to rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into their communities.

While a tailor-made response is essential to resolve disputes and prevent conflicts, we must also look at the larger picture and remove the causes or aggravating factors of conflicts. This calls for eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, as well as advancing justice and human rights around the world.

In 9 out of 10 cases, non-State actors have been committing the horrendous crime of recruiting and deploying children as combatants with impunity. Changing the culture of impunity demands a fresh outlook as well as strengthened mechanisms and measures from the world community. Let me share a glaring example from my own country. As the Secretary-General has mentioned in the report before the Council (S/2002/1299), children are being subjected to forced and involuntary recruitment by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Indeed the Maoists, who are seeking to remove the constitutional monarchy and who are undermining democratic values and institutions, have turned children into sacrificial lambs in their brutal pursuit of political power. Yesterday, the Maoists reportedly abducted 80 children from a school. The other day they took 150 children from school at gunpoint. These children are forced to undergo combat training. They are often used as human shields in attacks. This is something the rebels have been doing on a regular basis. Young girls have become the principal targets of abduction by the Maoists, who are reportedly striving to induct more women into their guerrilla force. Families that do not consent to giving their children away face the direst consequences.

This terror has set back the clock of progress in Nepal, a least developed country that was taking determined steps towards modernization. The Maoists are destroying schools and health posts, bridges and communication towers. They have also been killing teachers and political workers. Consequently, children are deprived of education and health services. The movement of people and trade have been impaired and tourism has dwindled. Villages have lost young men and women, as they flee their homes to escape Maoist atrocities and conscription. Development activities in rural areas have ground to a halt.

Nepal has been trying its best to find a peaceful settlement to the problem. Only recently, His Majesty the King has appealed to all political forces to find a peaceful solution to the country's political problems and to engage the country's resources and energy in promoting development and prosperity for the common people. The Prime Minister has also called on the Maoists to come to the negotiating table and has promised to create the necessary environment for talks to begin. Given their trail of deception, their attitude towards negotiation — treating it as a tactical step to destroy the enemy rather than as a strategic framework for a peaceful resolution of conflict — and their confusing and often contradictory statements, the Maoists are yet to emerge as a credible partner for peace. Still, the Government is willing and eager to talk to stop the wanton bloodletting so that the nation can pursue the path of peace and progress with total dedication and commitment.

Nepal is committed to protecting children in armed conflict. We have no child soldiers in our security forces. But we are profoundly distressed by the fact that the Maoists have been abusing our children, stifling their development and darkening their future. While bringing Maoists to justice for their crimes remains our obligation, we have instituted a programme to rehabilitate and reintegrate children who have escaped the Maoist trap. We will need the international community's financial and technical support in our endeavour.

Central to that is the United Nations, whose remarkable work we commend. Our appreciation goes to the front-line agencies of the United Nations, including the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme and others, for their work to protect children and promote their interests. We urge the Security Council to remain seized of situations under its consideration and to

remain vigilant about others so that international peace and security are not jeopardized.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Representative of Nepal for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Israel. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Mekel (Israel): At the outset, I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency for the month of January. Since this is my first statement before the Council, allow me to say that I look forward to a productive working relationship with you and with all the other members of the Council.

Israel is pleased to be participating once again in the debate on this item. Of the wide range of issues on the Council's agenda, those affecting the well-being of children are among the most heartbreaking. The images, reports and statistics documenting the plight of children in areas of armed conflict paint a truly horrific picture. And it is precisely that horror that compels us to take action.

The most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299) contains a review of the progress made in implementing Security Council resolutions and other international instruments, as well as recommendations and observations aimed at achieving more widespread conformity with international norms. We welcome the report's general focus on the horrific practice of using children as soldiers. Children should be kept safe in school, not in harm's way on the battlefield. Instead, too many children are recruited to fight as soldiers in wars they did not start and are forced to give up their childhoods and often their lives to the perpetuation of destructive conflicts. These offences have long disturbed our moral sensibilities.

Israel totally rejects the practice of using children as soldiers. We remain committed to eradicating this horrific practice and to improving more generally the situation of all children affected by armed conflict. Israel also supports efforts to increase awareness of the effects of armed conflict on children and to take children into greater consideration when addressing related issues, including terrorism and peacekeeping operations.

Israel further welcomes the report's specific focus on those parties to an armed conflict that have failed to live up to their obligations by recruiting or using child soldiers. Our ability to make genuine progress will depend not only on focusing on areas in which progress has been made but also on areas in which it has not.

Obviously, the formal practice of the forced conscription of children is abhorrent and must be outlawed and condemned. But the participation of children in conflict is not limited to formal military service. Children have also been recruited for roving militias, armed gangs and terrorist groups. In our region, children have been recruited and used by terrorist organizations as human shields, for the placing of explosives, as gunmen and even as suicide bombers, and it is regrettable that the Secretary-General's report does not mention this reprehensible tactic.

Moreover, children have been educated to revere and emulate fighters and terrorists. In our region, we are faced with the disturbing phenomenon of children's television programmes that encourage youngsters to abandon their studies and sacrifice their lives in acts of war and terrorism.

The subtler but no less repugnant indoctrination of children to hatred and violence, through official media, educational and religious institutions and other means, must also be the focus of widespread condemnation. Hatred and violence are learned behaviours. No child is born wanting to hate or kill. If we are ever to achieve the state of global peace that is the central objective of the Organization, we must ensure that we are educating the next generation in the values of tolerance, coexistence and non-violence.

In our region, children have suffered terribly from decades of conflict and from the constant threat of terrorism. The Middle East has endured more than its share of wars that have left scars on all people in the region, but particularly on children.

Israel has therefore supported international initiatives aimed at protecting children from the devastation of armed conflict, including the landmark Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Convention's Optional Protocols, to which we became a signatory last year. Israel's accession to the Convention was followed by the adoption of its Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, a law that ensured that rights of the child were guaranteed constitutional protection. The adoption of that law sparked a flurry of

judicial and legislative activity that broadened and extended Israeli society's commitment to the principles of the Convention.

Unfortunately, broad commitment to those principles, while reflected in the rhetoric of many delegations, is too often not matched in practice. There remain delegations that are quick to unite under the banner of protecting children from armed conflict, but whose actions betray their true political motives. Those delegations are far too willing to sacrifice genuine progress on these issues in favour of their political agenda.

In its most recent session, the General Assembly adopted a resolution pertaining specifically to the situation facing Palestinian children. With the adoption of that resolution, the Assembly has brought to three the number of resolutions on the human rights of children: one regarding the rights of the child, one regarding girls and one regarding Palestinian children. The latter is the only resolution adopted with respect to one specific group of children. There is, for instance, no resolution adopted concerning the five specific problematic areas cited by the Secretary-General in his report.

While Palestinian children are undoubtedly deserving of protection, one may ask whether the 106 Israeli children killed and the many Israeli children wounded by terrorism since September 2000, or the children in Africa or in parts of the Arab world are any less deserving. Notwithstanding the questionable wisdom of adopting particularized resolutions on issues of universal concern, it is a grave shame that those who supported that one-sided resolution were unable to rise above narrow their political agenda and call for the protection of both Israeli and Palestinian children alike.

We would urge responsible Member States not to indulge in such politicization of the work of the United Nations, especially with respect to an issue as important and urgent as our children. When we allow the issue of human rights to be used as a political weapon we cast doubt on our very commitment to human rights and we damage the credibility of this institution and its ability to work effectively on issues of common concern.

Israel yearns for the day when peace is the prevailing global condition, and when there is no longer any need to deal with the specific impact of armed conflict on children. But until that day, the international community must continue to act with resolve in extending protection to those who are most vulnerable. Israel is a full partner in this endeavour and will act through all means to ensure that all the world's children enjoy their fundamental right to grow up free from fear, free from suffering and free from the horrors of war and terrorism.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker is the representative of Ethiopia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia): At the outset, Sir, let me congratulate you and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. My congratulations go also to the new non-permanent members: Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain.

Ethiopia is grateful for this opportunity to address the Council on the issue of children and armed conflict. My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299) as well as for his brief but important presentation this morning. I also join previous speakers in thanking Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for the excellent presentations they made and for pointing out important issues we need to follow up on.

I know that time is short and that there are many other speakers on the list, so I shall cite only some of the points I was going to make; copies of my full statement have been made available.

Today's debate is the fifth open debate the Security Council has devoted to the protection of children in armed conflict. That indicates that it is very serious about this issue and gives it the importance that it deserves.

We also welcome the continued efforts of the Secretary-General to put the protection of children in armed conflict on the peace and security agenda of the United Nations; in that respect we strongly support his recommendation to integrate child protection in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building operations of the United Nations.

There are many who are involved in the work of making the lives of children more agreeable in all its aspects. But I will cite only two: the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations

Children's Fund. I commend them for their work and for their activities on behalf of children.

One can list many things; one can say many things. I think what needs to be said has been said by the Secretary-General and by all those who spoke before me. But I will say that there are two areas implied in the title of what we are discussing today: "Children and armed conflict". Under the first, we have to take all the actions needed to stop those who violate the rights and the sanctity of the lives of children and take action against them. Secondly, when we talk of armed conflict, we have to look at the root causes of such conflict all over the world.

I would conclude by saying that if the Council and the international community took a fraction of the time and resources they are now spending on one particular area of the world and spent it on this issue of stopping those who are attacking children, abducting children and recruiting children, then I am sure within a short period, even before the end of this year, that problem would have been dealt with.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Ethiopia for the kind words addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Costa Rica. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Over the past four years the Security Council has been holding periodic open debates on the situation of children in armed conflict. Unfortunately, the debates have had little practical impact. Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, has reminded us that today more than 300,000 children under the age of 18 are involved in more than 30 armed conflicts. Millions of children have been the innocent victims of war: they have been killed, have become refugees or have been displaced. Hundreds of thousands more have been orphaned or left defenceless as a result of armed conflict.

To be sure, in the past few years some progress has been made at the legal level. We welcome the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, which bans compulsory recruitment and participation in hostilities for those under the age of 18. Unfortunately, the Protocol does not also prohibit voluntary recruitment of minors.

We are also pleased at the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which classifies as a war crime the recruitment of children under the age of 15. But much remains to be done, and all States should now accede to the Optional Protocol and the Rome Statute.

We were pleased to see the inclusion in the Secretary-General's report of a list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use children as combatants, in violation of their international obligations under paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001).

It is high time for the international community to shoulder its responsibilities vis-a-vis those who are committing such massive violations of the fundamental rights of children. The Security Council must act. The Council must now require of those entities and States on the list that they stop recruiting children and demobilize those already recruited. Where necessary, the Council should consider imposing sanctions on entities or Governments that use or recruit children in their armed forces.

But we cannot fail to note that we do not agree with the rather restrictive interpretation offered by the Secretary-General of the mandate contained in paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001). In particular, we would question the Secretariat's decision to include on the list only those situations currently on the Council's agenda. We believe that the Secretariat would have done better by the children of the world had it adopted a broader approach to its mandate. We would like, therefore, to invite members of the Security Council to give detailed consideration to a parallel report that was prepared by a coalition of non-governmental organizations, the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers.

This parallel report includes a number of well-founded accusations against various governmental, paramilitary and revolutionary entities in 25 countries, as well as a list of specific recommendations to deal with each one of them. I would like, if I may, to mention a few of them.

For example, on Afghanistan, the Coalition recommends that the Security Council monitor the new national army and existing factions so as to ensure that they are not recruiting children under the age of 18. On

Somalia, they also recommend to all parties that they adopt a policy of non-recruitment of children under the age of 18.

On Angola, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, the Coalition recommends the implementation of specific programmes for the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers as well as the creation of educational and employment opportunities in refugee camps, as an alternative to joining a rebel force.

On Colombia, the Sudan, India and Indonesia, the Coalition recommends the inclusion of all revolutionary and paramilitary groups on the list prepared pursuant to paragraph 16. On Myanmar, the Coalition believes that both Government and opposition forces should be included in the list.

The Coalition recommends that the Government and opposition groups in Liberia should demobilize child soldiers. On Macedonia, Yugoslavia and Pakistan, it deems necessary further investigation to determine if opposition paramilitary groups are, in fact, recruiting children.

On the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nepal, the Coalition suggests, inter alia, the classification of the recruitment of children as a criminal offence. With respect to Palestine and the occupied territories, the Coalition calls on the various groups not to encourage children to participate in acts of violence.

With respect to the Russian Federation, the Coalition is proposing that the Chechen rebel groups be included on the paragraph 16 list. On Rwanda and Uganda, the Coalition recommends the adoption of measures to implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the carrying out of programmes for the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers.

Lastly, the Coalition recommends that the Secretary-General draw the attention of the Security Council to the situation in Sri Lanka.

As can be seen from this list of recommendations, the Security Council is facing a tremendous task if an end is to be put to the use of child soldiers. Accordingly, we believe that the Council must adopt a holistic approach to protect young people.

First, the Council should ensure that any resolution or measure adopted to deal with a specific situation of armed conflict must include clear and specific provisions aimed at safeguarding the security and fundamental rights of children during armed confrontation.

Second, the Council should set up an institutional mechanism that would enable it to consider, on an ongoing and comprehensive basis, the problem of children in armed conflict. The Council should, accordingly, set up a subsidiary body to monitor the situation of children in all situations that are on the Council's agenda. To that end, it would make use of information provided by Member States and by non-governmental organizations. Following the model of the Counter-Terrorism Committee, the subsidiary body set up should have a group of independent experts who would evaluate objectively the information that is received. They could also carry out fact-finding missions where there are accusations of serious violations of the rights of the child, and they could offer early warning in the event of a situation that might threaten the security of children.

Third, the Security Council, with assistance from the Secretary-General, should, on an ongoing basis, maintain, review and update the list of entities that recruit or use children in conflict, in violation of their international obligations. It is essential to broaden the list to include not just situations already on the Council's agenda, but also situations that, because of the seriousness of the violations of children's rights involved, should be referred to the Council by the Secretary-General. In this connection, the Council should request the Secretary-General to update the list regularly.

Fourth, the Security Council should ensure that plans for the post-conflict demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of combatants must include programmes to facilitate the rehabilitation of child soldiers. Peace-building processes must take account of the perspective and the needs of children.

Fifth, it is essential to take effective steps to regulate illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, which facilitate the use of children as combatants and are the main weapons used in the destruction wrought. We would advocate a complete prohibition on the transfer of weapons, ammunition and military assistance to Governments or armed groups that violate human rights, including the fundamental rights of children.

Sixth, the Security Council, in any peacekeeping operation, must include humanitarian personnel who are dedicated to dealing with the problems of children who are victims of conflict. Such personnel should facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance to children during conflicts. In this context, we are pleased that the Security Council has included in some peacekeeping operations expert advisers on the protection of children.

Seventh, before adopting any sanctions regime, the Security Council should carry out an in-depth study of any possible impact on the most vulnerable population, particularly children. Any sanctions regime must include exceptions so as to minimize any damaging impact on children.

We deem it essential that the Secretary-General make full use of his powers under Article 99 of the Charter and refer to the Security Council any situations of armed conflict in which young people under the age of 18 are being recruited or used in fighting.

Over the long term, the only way to save children from evil consequences of armed conflict is to do away with war. As long as war exists, we cannot free children from those harmful consequences. As long as there are wars, children will be orphaned, displaced, hurt or killed. As long as there are wars, schools and hospitals will be burned down, roads destroyed and families broken apart. As long as there are wars, it will be impossible to ensure that children can fully develop into worthy, productive and creative adults.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Indonesia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia): My delegation would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of January and to extend to you its sincere appreciation for organizing this open meeting on one of our key concerns, children and armed conflict. In our view, this meeting is an indication of the Council's continued commitment to the welfare of children in general and of its determination to ensure their protection.

At this juncture, I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2002/1299), and to his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for his efforts on this issue. Particularly worthy of notice in the current report are the commitments obtained for the protection and well-being of children in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Indonesia continues to be concerned about the continued use of children in armed conflict around the world. In this regard, we take particular notice of the list annexed to the report, as requested by the Council in its resolution 1379 (2001), of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of their international legal obligations. We are disturbed at the abuses that children suffer in camps, and at the general suffering and deprivation that they endure because of conflicts.

In that connection, it is also important to point out the persisting problem of humanitarian access in conflict situations. In the occupied Palestinian territories, for example, the Secretary-General reports that the conditions imposed by Israel — notably stricter closures, curfews, roadblocks and checkpoints — have created humanitarian problems including frequent school closures and a drop in immunization levels. This kind of avoidable inhumanity to society, especially to children, must not be allowed to continue.

In the past, we have lent our national support to international efforts at ensuring the protection of children in such conflicts and at alleviating the suffering of those who have been unfortunate enough to find themselves in the midst of them. My delegation has always seen these two aspects of the problem: on the one hand, children are deployed as instruments in a situation while, on the other, they are intended and unintended victims.

Children who are involved in battle, whether they are hurt or not, are victims, and there is not much of an escape once the bullets, or the logistical demands of conflict, take over. It is the responsibility of those formulating international law within the multilateral system to continue to adopt measures to limit children's involvement in and exposure to conflict. The continued recruitment of under-age children for the purposes of conflict should not continue with impunity.

To respond to these concerns, the international community possesses several international instruments, such as the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Indonesia is a signatory. That Convention underlines the political, social, economic and civil rights of children. Indonesia also supports the

Optional Protocol that strengthens the Convention by calling for a minimum age of 18 for eligibility for participation in hostilities. Unfortunately, in recent conflicts the Convention and its Optional Protocol have conveniently been ignored.

In this connection, another key international document by which the international community has tried to address this issue in recent times is "A world fit for children" (General Assembly resolution S-27/2, annex), the outcome document of the landmark May 2002 special session of the General Assembly on children. It calls on the world community to make the world safer for children, and outlines the responsibilities of nations and the measures they must take in that regard. Among other things, it specifies an assortment of responses to protect children from armed conflict and impunity. We are of the opinion that it is a thorough and strong document that, if implemented, would go a long way towards resolving several issues relating to the protection of children in conflict situations.

With reference to post-conflict situations, it is important to take a brief look at the example of what the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has been able to achieve in Sierra Leone. In 2001, UNICEF helped more than 3,600 child soldiers in Sierra Leone to leave army life and rejoin their families. The children obtained counselling, vocational training and education towards reintegration into their communities. We commend and support programmes of this nature, not only those of UNICEF and other relevant United Nations agencies, in conflict and post-conflict situations where children have been a factor.

Similarly, my delegation stresses the importance of enhancing the monitoring mechanisms spelled out in resolution 1379 (2001). Since the adoption of that resolution, we are pleased that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and other relevant international agreements and conventions have entered into force. We cannot afford to pay only lip service to this very important matter, and must therefore find ways of implementing these critical international instruments. To that end, we congratulate those States that are already making efforts to harmonize their national legislation with available international child rights standards.

As we have often said, the future of humanity depends on children, and they must be protected because that is the only protection that the future of mankind has. We cannot have our children exposed to violence so early in their lives without expecting them to bear and carry insecurity, violence and hatred within them, especially when they have also forfeited their youth and the chance of a good education at such an early stage of their lives.

While conflict itself should be avoided altogether, children should not be dragged into it if it does arise. A child should not have to carry a gun, find himself at the receiving end of gunfire or be hurt by conflict. Rather than celebrate minor moral victories, the international community should focus its attention and evaluation on the larger picture.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Indonesia for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Sierra Leone. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone): Mr. President, my delegation would like to associate itself with the words of welcome and congratulation extended to you by previous speakers. We look forward to working with you in your capacity as the President of the Security Council and as the new Permanent Representative of France.

Sierra Leone has no more child soldiers. We say this not with a feeling of pride. We have no reason to take pride in the fact that Sierra Leone is not named in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2002/1299) among areas of conflict where children are still being recruited and/or used as child soldiers. On the contrary, we say Sierra Leone has no more child soldiers only with a sense of relief; relief that our children, those who survived the atrocious rebel war, are free at last from the abominable practice of recruiting children to kill and be killed.

As a country that has just emerged from a prolonged and brutal armed conflict in which children were both perpetrators and victims, we know from experience the immediate and long-term consequences of the abduction, drugging, training and deployment of children for armed combat. Experience has also taught us that urgent action must be taken to put an end to

such practices, first and foremost through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants.

In 1999 the Government of Sierra Leone insisted that its peace agreement with the rebel movement the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) must include an appeal to the conscience of the parties to recognize that the children of Sierra Leone, especially those affected by the conflict, in view of their vulnerability, are entitled to special care and protection consistent with the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government, for its part, also pledged to accord particular attention to the issue of child soldiers by mobilizing resources through the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other agencies, to address the special needs of these children in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process.

I would like to pay tribute to the Special Representative, Mr. Otunnu, and to Ms. Bellamy of UNICEF for their untiring efforts on behalf of the children of Sierra Leone. We would also like to commend them for their statements this morning.

Sierra Leone has also learned from experience that the problem of former child soldiers could be addressed through the establishment of an oversight institution for the welfare of children in a post-conflict situation. Beyond the disarmament and demobilization process, however, we have tried to ensure that the welfare of children and the protection of their right to develop in a peaceful environment are at the centre of government policy-making and resource-allocation strategies.

Our thanks again go to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu. His ground-breaking 15-point agenda for action for the children of Sierra Leone paved the way for the establishment in January last year of a statutory National Commission for War-Affected Children. It is now the principal child protection and advocacy mechanism in the country. Although the scope of its work is relatively wide and covers different categories of war-affected children, the Commission is expected to address the special needs of former child combatants.

My delegation takes note of the reference in the Secretary-General's report to the risk we face in Sierra Leone of losing thousands of former child combatants to the conflict across the border in Liberia. This underscores our concern that in the absence of adequate resources for implementing the Government's reintegra'ion programme for ex-combatants, especially the thousands of demobilized child ex-combatants, those warlords will take advantage of the situation and recruit them again into the killing circus that has characterized the activities of the rebel movements in the subregion. We therefore endorse wholeheartedly the recommendation that the Security Council and Member States should be urged to provide sustained and adequate resources to the relevant organizations engaged in implementing DDR programmes for children.

My delegation strongly believes that the establishment of international norms proscribing the involvement of children in armed conflict, and strict compliance with those norms, are important steps in our collective effort to rid the world of this unconscionable practice. My delegation shares the view set out by the Secretary-General in his report that the codification of international norms and standards for the protection of children during conflict has made an impressive contribution to that effort. Sierra Leone has ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have also become a party to the African regional equivalent, the Organization of African Unity and African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Our ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court is also a testimony to our commitment to, among other things, the relevant provisions concerning the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and the mechanism of accountability for crimes specific to children.

We also share the view of the Secretary-General that the challenge today is to ensure their implementation on the ground, that is, compliance with these international norms. The list of violators contained in his report is indeed an important step forward in our efforts, as he puts it, "to induce compliance with international child protection obligations by parties to conflict" (*S/2002/1299, para. 28*).

However, my delegation believes — and we would like to stress this point here — that we must also recognize that rebels and other non-State insurgent groups are not parties to those international instruments

on the involvement or use of children in armed conflict. As we witnessed in Sierra Leone, notwithstanding the commitments rebel movements make in peace agreements, these forces, at least in the West African subregion, account, in our view, for most of the recorded abuses of international norms for the protection of children in armed conflict. We recall here the number of instances where the RUF rebel movement reneged on peace and ceasefire agreements.

We observe that there are only four Governments on the "name and shame" list annexed to the Secretary-General's latest report. That of course does not mean that we should downplay violations by States. The list indicates clearly, as far as we are concerned, that ways and means must be found for dealing more effectively with the role of non-State actors in the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

This brings my delegation to a related issue that has been placed on the agenda of the Security Council: the illegal trade and transfer of small arms and light weapons. Many speakers referred to it this morning, and Switzerland and other delegations also spoke about it eloquently this afternoon.

The Sierra Leone delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate once again its appeal to all States, in particular manufacturers and their agents, to ensure, including through appropriate legislation, that these weapons do not get into the hands of rebel movements and other non-State actors. Security Council arms embargoes and travel restrictions against rebel movements are very important — we recognize that — but are certainly not enough, especially where sanctions monitoring mechanisms do not exist or are woefully ineffective.

Finally, based on the Sierra Leone experience, my delegation would like to see in the draft resolution to be adopted by the Security Council following its discussion of the Secretary-General's report some reference to the question of impunity. The Special Court for Sierra Leone should be seen as an example of the type of mechanism available to the international community for addressing impunity, especially impunity related to the recruitment of children to commit heinous atrocities in conflict situations.

We feel that the Special Court could be regarded as a court set up for our children's sake. As the prosecutor, David Crane, said recently, the children of Sierra Leone have suffered enough both as victims and as perpetrators. The objective is to prosecute not children, but the people, including those warlords, who forced thousands of children to commit unspeakable crimes.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Sierra Leone for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

The next speaker is the representative of Slovenia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): Slovenia has already associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Greece on behalf of the European Union and with the statement made by the representative of Austria as Chair of the Human Security Network, and we fully endorse both of them. Since the issue of children and armed conflict is one of particular importance for Slovenia, I would like to highlight some points in our national capacity.

Let me first express our appreciation to you, Sir, for having convened this meeting. We consider it primarily to be an opportunity to review the progress achieved and to identify further action to be taken. Since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999), the issue of children and armed conflict has been firmly established on the agenda of the Security Council, in recognition of its importance for peace and security, thus adding a new dimension to the discussions in this body, which Slovenia firmly supports.

We are pleased to see that a number of significant developments were achieved in the past year, particularly in the normative domain, such as the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Slovenia ratified the Rome Statute in December 2001, and we are looking forward to the constitution of the new Court in March this year. Almost a year ago, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict entered into force, and it is encouraging to note the growing acceptance of this new instrument. Slovenia will ratify it in the very near future.

The special session of the General Assembly on children, held last May, and the adoption of the outcome document, "A world fit for children" reaffirmed our joint commitment to protect children during armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law. This provides the

necessary political, as well as legal frameworks, to combat the abuse of children in armed conflict. We call on all Member States and all other parties in conflict to fully implement or respect their provisions, and especially to act against impunity for all crimes committed against children.

Slovenia welcomes the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. We would like to express our sincere appreciation of and support for Special Representative Olara Otunnu and his Office for their work in this respect. This is the first time that parties recruiting and using child soldiers have been specifically identified, giving us a clear picture of who the perpetrators of crimes against children really are. The report and the annex list represent a very clear sign that the international community is no longer ready to tolerate abuses of children in conflict situations. They also represent a concrete contribution to the raising of global awareness on this issue. Slovenia shares the views expressed that the report should be the first step towards drawing up an integral list of all parties using children, not only those involved in situations on the Security Council's agenda.

Austria, on behalf of the Human Security Network, presented a set of specific recommendations to the Council on how to further address this issue, and Slovenia fully supports those recommendations. I should like just to recall the need to regularly update the list, to extend it by including situations that are not on the Security Council's agenda and to ensure that the issue of war-affected children is taken fully into account in all of its decisions on peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building operations.

Another positive development this year is the beginning of the deployment of child protection advisers in some United Nations peace operations. We concur with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative that the deployment of such advisers in each United Nations peace operation is highly desirable.

In addition to efforts undertaken globally, regional and interregional action is needed. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to share our views with the like-minded countries of the Human Security Network. As pointed out by Austria, the Network believes that it can significantly contribute to the global debate on the issue, as well as improve the situation in our respective regions through various concrete activities.

Being aware of the importance of children for the future and for the prosperity of our societies, Slovenia decided several years ago to contribute to the recovery of South-Eastern Europe by establishing an institution to assist war-affected children — the Regional Centre for the Psychosocial Well-being of Children, which is also called "Together". The basic aim of the Centre is to strengthen local structures in the field of child care, to develop mechanisms for their psycho-social protection and to empower war-affected children, remaining in the region even after international assistance has been withdrawn. We would like to thank all donors and to invite all other countries and institutions to work with us to improve the situation of war-affected children in South-Eastern Europe.

Another of Slovenia's initiatives contributing to the safety of children in the region of South-Eastern Europe is in the area of anti-personnel mines and demining — the work conducted by the Slovenia-based International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance.

The report of the Secretary-General points out that little progress has been made regarding efforts to sever the link between the proliferation and widespread use of small arms and light weapons and the related victimization of children. In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Security Council that a United Nations subregional conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, co-organized by the United Nations and Slovenia, will be held in Slovenia in March this year. We hope that the conference will contribute to reducing the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and its negative impact, including its impact on children, in the region of South-Eastern Europe.

In conclusion, allow me to reassure you, Mr. President, that Slovenia fully supports all endeavours of the Office of the Special Representative, the United Nations Children's Fund and other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in this field. We encourage continuous and meaningful dialogue and cooperation among all of us, with the aim of alleviating the plight of children affected by armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of

Myanmar. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): In congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council, I would also like to thank you for convening a public meeting on children and armed conflict. The situation of children in armed conflict is heart-wrenching. As the Secretary-General's report pointed out, war displaces families and communities, and children are at risk of exploitation and forcible recruitment. This underscores the fact that peace and stability are important, not only for the development of the country concerned but also for the welfare of its population, particularly women and children, which are the most vulnerable groups in conflict situations.

As reflected in the Secretary-General's report, impressive gains have been made in codifying international norms and standards for the protection and well-being of children. We share the opinion that there is a need to promote and disseminate these norms and standards and to raise awareness about them on the ground.

We take satisfaction from the fact that, in preparing the list, the Secretary-General was guided by resolution 1379 (2001). We note, however, that the report departed from its mandate when it made reference under situations of concern but included in the list to a number of countries, including Myanmar. We particularly regret that in addition to the armed insurgent groups in Myanmar, the national armed forces were also referred to — this despite the fact that there is no credible evidence of the use and recruitment of children by the Myanmar Armed Forces.

In that regard, I share the view expressed this morning by the Council member about the need for verification and checking the validity of information before it is presented to the Security Council. We should, the issue of protection of children in preferences. The allegation made regarding the training is the result of interviewing 20 of an insurgents inside a neighbouring country. Additionally, the situation in Myanmar is not the any context of the resolutions relating to international peace and security.

The Myanmar armed forces is an all-volunteer army. Those entering military service do so of their own free will. Under the Myanmar Defence Services Act of 1974 and War Office Council Instruction 13/73, a person cannot enter in the armed forces until he has attained the age of 18. There is neither a draft system nor forced conscription by the Government of Myanmar.

The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights, who had visited Myanmar four times, expressed concern in his report over

> "abuses of civilians and refugees on the part of armed opposition groups, notably the Karenni National Liberation Army, which has been accused of forced conscription of male villagers, including under age youths" (A/55/290, para. 19).

It is a practice of armed insurgent groups in Myanmar to recruit and abuse child soldiers. That was brought to the wide attention of the international community in 2000, when some members of a splinter insurgent group, styling themselves as God's Army, took over a hospital in Ratchaburi, in Thailand, taking 700 people hostage. The self-styled God's Army is an insurgent group led by two 18-year-old twins, Johnny and Luther Htoo.

We share the view of many delegations that the best way of protecting children in armed conflict lies in conflict prevention and resolution. Myanmar regained its independence in January 1948. In a matter of months, it had to face the challenge of insurgencies by various armed groups. Until recently, there were 18 armed insurgent groups in the country, as well as a narco-trafficking armed group.

For over 40 years, Myanmar had to suffer the scourge of insurgency. The ethnic insurgencies which had existed in Myanmar since its independence were contained and rolled back only in recent years through the painstaking efforts of the Government. As a result, 15 armed ethnic insurgent groups have participated in the exchange of arms for peace programme. They are now actively engaged in developmental activities in their respective regions, together with the Government. Apart from a splinter armed group of narco-traffickers, only one ethnic insurgent group, the Karyn National Union (KNU), remains to return to the fold, and the Government continues to extend an olive branch to this group.

For the first time in nearly half a century, the armed conflict that plagued Myanmar has ceased in all parts of the country with the exception of a few border areas. The Special Rapporteur on human rights, in commending the achievements of the ceasefire agreements by the Government with 15 armed ethnic

groups, stated in his report: "After decades of fear, insecurity and widespread violence ... the first dividend of the ceasefire agreements is peace and the second is some development" (*ibid., para. 12*).

The Government is promoting a culture of peace. We are fully aware that, in any conflict situation, children are among the most vulnerable groups. We share the determination to give the fullest attention to the question of protection of children in armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report has pointed out that education has also been a casualty of war. In Myanmar, since civil insurgency has effectively been overcome in nearly all parts of the country, the Government has been able to concentrate its efforts on development of the areas where fighting raged for over four decades. In 1992, the Government set up a separate ministry for that purpose and was able to bring development to those areas. It has built hospitals, roads and bridges in these border areas. From 1988-1989 to 2000-2001, in a span of 10 years, it built more than 350 schools in the former insurgent-held areas. The Government has now been able to provide child immunization for all children nationwide. We are able to conduct extensive immunization programmes in the remote areas.

It is a time-honoured tradition in Myanmar to place special emphasis on the overall development of children and to ensure their protection, upbringing and development. In bringing about peace and stability, we endeavour to provide the children with a peaceful and developed world so that they will have a secure and enabling environment to develop their individual capabilities.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Colombia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased, Sir, to see you representing France and presiding over this Security Council meeting devoted to an item that connects two important aspects of United Nations action in the world: the maintenance of international peace and the protection of children.

My delegation is grateful for the presentations made at the beginning of the meeting by the Secretary-General, by his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ms. Carol Bellamy. We acknowledge the commitment of these latter two officials in ensuring that peacekeeping operations focus on the special needs of children in conflict situations.

The needs of children are one aspect of the broad actions required to protect civilians in armed conflict. In this respect, I would like to recall that in the statement issued on 20 December 2002 on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts (S/PRST/2002/41), the Council encouraged United Nations agencies to cooperate with Member States in formulating a comprehensive, coherent and action-oriented approach to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299), which is the basis for this debate, highlighted several special needs of children in conflict situations. It referred, among other things, to juvenile justice, education on the risks of landmines, and care for internally displaced children and for girls who are exposed to sexual abuse. Therefore, we encourage Council members to bear those needs clearly in mind when considering conflicts that are included in their programme of work.

The problem of child soldiers is so important that it has captured the attention of agencies, such as the World Bank, which in the past were quite remote from this topic. The report's list of military forces and rebel groups that recruit children alerts us to the need to resolve these conflicts and to counter the world trade in small arms and light weapons.

We call on the Council to consider establishing the origin of arms that are used by groups that recruit minors, and we call, in particular, on arms-exporting countries, for greater controls.

We regret the fact that many rebel groups within Colombia continue to recruit and kidnap children in order to carry out their attacks against society. The Government of Colombia, in accordance with its accession to international conventions — in particular to the relevant Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child — does not recruit those younger than 18 in its military forces. We encourage other States to accede to the Protocol and to respect this limit on compulsory recruitment and on the participation of minors in combat.

As this is my last official function as representative of Colombia to the United Nations, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to participate in this debate. I assure you that it will guide my personal action in this area in the coming years. In addition, I thank my colleagues of the countries members of the Security Council for the friendship and cooperation that they extended to me during Colombia's two years on the Council, which concluded just a few days ago. Moreover, I should like to wish the new members every success in their work on behalf of international peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the members of the Security Council, to say that we regret the departure of the Permanent Representative of Colombia, to thank him for his very valuable contribution to the Council's work over the past two years, and warmly to wish him every success in his future endeavours.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Malawi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Lamba (Malawi): Let me begin by saying that I shall present what one might call a summary in the interests of time. Copies of my complete statement have been deposited with the conference officers.

I should like to join preceding speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of this important organ of the United Nations and in thanking you and the Security Council for organizing this important debate to highlight the plight of children in conflict situations. My delegation would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his lucid and candid report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299), which forms the substance of this debate. Special acknowledgement also goes to the excellent presentations by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and by the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Ms. Carol Bellamy. The information that has been provided will undoubtedly lead to soul-searching with regard to the strategies needed for the protection of children, especially in armed conflicts, but also for the necessary post-conflict care. My delegation is satisfied with the approach aimed at monitoring and reporting the treatment of children through the codification of international norms and standards to secure maximum protection.

Malawi cannot claim much experience in armed conflict, and the problem of children now under discussion might be considered rather peripheral on Malawi's socio-economic agenda. However, the welfare of children must form the central feature of any nation's socio-economic planning. Malawi has supported all actions designed to create an improved environment for our children's realization of their full physical, emotional and intellectual potential. All regional and international protocols for children have been accorded Malawi's support.

Malawi considers imperative the promotion of any action that alleviates children's suffering and deprivation, which negatively affect their hope for a good future. Although Malawi may not be engaged in conflict or warfare, it — like many other African countries — is engaged in a more subtle war against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which has created approximately 600,000 orphans, of whom no less than one fifth were born already infected with HIV and therefore face a bleak future in an environment blighted by excessive poverty.

The Malawi Government has placed children high on its development agenda, and its vigorous intervention in child development — which covers nutrition, water and sanitation, psycho-social care, education and health — demonstrates its seriousness in addressing the welfare of children. Malawi ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, and the Government is working in collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to assiduously monitor the implementation of the Convention.

Other concrete measures taken by the Government include the establishment, in 1999, of a children's rights unit within the Malawi Human Rights Commission to protect children from abuse, violence and exploitation. The Malawi Law Commission has embarked on a review of existing legislation to bring it into conformity with international human rights standards, including those for children. Financial and technical assistance will be needed here to promote the administration of juvenile justice and human rights education. Malawi is also a signatory to all International Labour Organization protocols, and national legislation has been enacted to regulate the minimum age of employment. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has always proved to be an ardent partner in the improvement of the state of Malawi's children.

Our achievements today must contribute to a positive and hopeful future for our children. That is why my delegation commends the Secretary-General's report for exposing and providing heightened awareness of the plight of children created by a senseless adult world. My delegation fully endorses all measures proposed and adopted for the creation of a world fit for children and all actions taken under international humanitarian and human rights law to induce compliance by the perpetrators of crimes against children.

Therefore, my delegation hopes for systematic international compliance, on the part of both States parties and insurgent armed groups, with two instruments: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. In the report, Malawi is pleased to note the United Nations offer of technical and legal assistance in the area of ensuring children's rights.

In conflict regions, no child can be safe, whether that child is in the fighting ranks or in a devastated home environment. The trauma experienced by children in conflict remains with them long afterwards. Malawi therefore endorses the establishment of child protection advisers in affected countries, such as Angola, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to collaborate with other stakeholders, such as UNICEF and Governments.

Indeed, children's rights must be highlighted on the United Nations agenda of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building, with child protection adequately integrated into that agenda. It is our hope that the draft guidelines formulated by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs will make an effective contribution to the promotion of effective child protection. The proposed comprehensive child protection training to supervise the conduct of staff towards children in mission areas stands out as a necessary initiative that deserves unqualified support. Equally important is the suggested inclusion of landmine risk education programmes and rehabilitation of child victims of mines.

The exploitation of children as forced labour to extract natural resources in various countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, only emphasizes the inhuman tragedy faced by displaced children. A childhood spent in refugee camps encounters enormous challenges. Indeed, apart from forced labour, the recruitment of children by armed forces and by other groups deprives them of the right to education, to proper health care, to development and, above all, to choices. A refugee camp in a foreign country creates an even more complicated situation for children. Malawi fully supports the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, whose work and intervention brings hope to the many suffering children.

The horrible experiences of girls and women in armed conflicts present a nemesis to any norms of civilization and form a topic deserving urgent action. The substantial claims of sexual exploitation involving rape, forced recruitment, abduction and trafficking all serve as condemning testimony to the absence of commitment to practical support for girls' welfare. On a different occasion in the United Nations, Malawi expressed total condemnation of the despicable sexual exploitation of girls in conflict zones not only by armed forces, but, more disturbingly, by aid workers and peacekeepers. Malawi notes with satisfaction the Plan of Action of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises, the strict implementation of which should make a significant difference and contribution towards the protection of girls from sexual exploitation.

My delegation would like to pay special tribute to the Secretary-General for including in his report lists of people and States involved in the violation of the legal and human rights of children who find themselves subjected to various indignities and deprivation. The list should create a time for reflection over the important obligation of international child protection through unquestionable compliance with international agreements and protocols. Malawi will support any Security Council actions with respect to States and organizations listed in the report. Children's rights deserve respect and their flagrant violation with impunity should not be tolerated and must be addressed through recourse to punitive measures, such as tough sanctions.

Finally, the field visits of the Special Representative have demonstrated the crucial importance of such an approach to verify and elucidate the war-affected child's situation in conflict zones.

Such visits, which need to be encouraged, give the Special Representative a visual picture of the extent of the problem. The data so competently collected enriches our comprehension of the child's predicament. As the Security Council deliberates the problems facing the child in conflict areas, it is Malawi's strong plea that children facing other crises, such as HIV/AIDS, should feature in the Special Representative's future itinerary. For example, Malawi, where the pandemic has created untold misery for children, would benefit from a proactive visit by the Special Representative to assess the efficacy of the interventions and child-protection measures currently in place and subsequently to advise appropriately.

My delegation would like to conclude this statement by once again thanking the Secretary-General for submitting a landmark report on children, which will challenge the deliberations of the Security Council. If the mishandled child, who holds the future, cannot be considered a security issue, what can? If we cannot demonstrate concern for the child now, who will and when? There is no time to stand idle and watch.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Liechtenstein. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting on a subject to which we attach the highest importance.

(*spoke in English*)

Liechtenstein welcomes action by the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict and, in particular, the open debates, the products of which have been instrumental in creating a normative framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Much to our satisfaction, the special session on children last year also placed strong emphasis on this topic.

As far as standard-setting is concerned, the year 2002 was a good one for children. Two new legal instruments entered into force: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Liechtenstein has signed both of these Protocols and is preparing to ratify them.

Another step forward — an historic step indeed — was the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Statute, among other things, provides for the better protection of children, especially but not exclusively in times of armed conflict. The inclusion of the recruitment and use by all parties to a conflict of children under the age of 15 in conflicts of both an international and non-international character as a war crime is of special importance in this respect.

Success in standard-setting must not give us cause for complacency — quite to the contrary. While the existing standards are high, the picture continues to be very grim when it comes to their application. The rights of millions of children around the world continue to be violated in numerous and brutal ways. Children affected by armed conflict, with all its manifold and devastating consequences, are in the worst situation. We therefore agree with the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict that we must move with resolve into an era of application, which was also one of the lessons we drew from last year's special session on children.

In the implementation of these existing norms, the Security Council can play a central role. The creation of a list of parties to conflicts on the Council's agenda that continue to recruit or use child soldiers is one measure through which to make progress in assuring compliance with international obligations. The list should be expanded to cover parties to conflicts in a global manner, not only in situations on the agenda of the Council. We welcome such practical steps and hope that the Council will again agree on a strong response to the report before us and thus ensure a follow-up based on the recommendations contained in the report.

We welcome the report before the Council and its emphasis on systematically integrating child protection objectives into the mandates of peace operations, including through the deployment of child protection advisers and special training for peacekeeping personnel. Given the importance of the participation of children in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children must be given a voice, in particular in the process of post-conflict peace-building, rather than merely having their best interests represented by others.

Liechtenstein has supported the work of the Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, right from

the inception of his mandate. His advocacy on behalf of children in armed conflict over the past six years has been heard widely and proven effective. Worldwide awareness of children and the ways in which they are affected by armed conflict is increasing. In order to enhance the application of the legal instruments I referred to at the outset of my statement, more needs to be done to make these achievements better known.

Advocacy and creating awareness help to broaden the base of support and to get more stakeholders involved. In this context, the work and involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups can be instrumental, especially in highlighting different aspects of the plight of children affected by armed conflict. In this context, we have taken note with great interest of two reports: first, the "1379 Report" of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and, secondly, the study on the voices of girl child soldiers presented by the Quaker United Nations Office.

The situation of the girl child is one aspect that requires our special attention in order to effectively protect the rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflicts. Those conflicts have manifold and complex consequences for all children, but specific forms of victimization are often added to the plight of girls and women. Rape, abduction, sexual enslavement and trafficking are some of the crimes perpetrated against female victims in particular. What is characteristic of such crimes is their traumatic nature and long-term effects. One figure may illustrate this point: two out of three women and girls raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda have reportedly tested positive for HIV/AIDS. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the genocide continues in a silent way. True stability and security cannot be re-established for long after an armed conflict has subsided, because of the specific crimes inflicted especially upon women and girls.

All of that is to say that the international community would be well advised to address very specific issues and details regarding children affected by armed conflict. As I indicated at the outset, it does not suffice to adopt broad norms and standards. The effects of armed conflicts on children, the different forms of child labour and sexual exploitation and the resulting special vulnerability of children to the HIV/AIDS pandemic stand out as areas where concerted national and international action is a prerequisite for successful and durable solutions. All these issues constitute large-scale crises that can be addressed only through specific and coordinated action by all of us.

Nobody must be allowed to deprive children of both their childhood and their future. By permitting this we would be violating a moral imperative we all hold dear. But, moreover, we would not only be destroying the future of individual children but also the collective future of the countries concerned.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasant duty of expressing my delegation's satisfaction at seeing the representative of France presiding over the Security Council as we begin the year. My country enjoys excellent relations with France, relations that are based on mutual trust and respect. Allow me also, Mr. President, to pay tribute to your predecessor, the representative of Colombia. I commend him for the skill and ability with which he discharged his difficult tasks during his presidency last month.

I would like to congratulate Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain on becoming members of the Council. I would also like to pay well-deserved tribute to the outgoing members. We are very grateful to them for their efforts, in particular with regard to the search for peace in my country.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting of the Security Council. I also express my gratitude for the Secretary-General's important report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299), which Special Representative Olara Otunnu presented this morning with his usual eloquence. I also thank Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for her important statement.

With regard to the item under consideration, I would like to remind the Council that problems pertaining to the protection of children are central to my Government's primary concerns. That concern is reflected, for example, in the existence of an institutional and legal framework to guarantee the rights of children. Despite the continuing financial difficulties and war, my Government has reacted

positively to all the recommendations relating to the protection of children that are contained in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 1325 (2000) on the subject of women and peace and security. Furthermore, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is party to the major international instruments on the protection of the rights of the child, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 — concerning the minimum age for employment — and No. 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and, of course, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The implementation of the Rome Statute is of great importance to my Government, which expended great effort to facilitate its entry into force, which took place on 1 July 2002. This treaty includes an important provision to protect the rights of children, making it a war crime to conscript children under the age of 15 years into national armed forces.

The Council should also recall that my Government has been greatly involved in the process of protecting children, including through the promulgation of its Decree-Law No. 66, of 9 June 2000, which dealt with the demobilization and reintegration of vulnerable groups in armed forces. That political will has been reflected in the establishment of an appropriate structure, the National Bureau for Demobilization and Reintegration (BUNADER), which is charged with following up and implementing the decree-law in partnership with UNICEF, whose valuable work is greatly appreciated.

Since 1997, my Government has been aware of the urgency of the need to end the presence of child soldiers known as *kadogo* in the Congolese armed forces. Since that time, my Government has developed several programmes to demobilize child soldiers. Most of those programmes required multilateral support, in particular through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Human Rights Field Office in Kinshasa. Other programmes required bilateral assistance.

While today we welcome the sincere cooperation and partnership that has developed between my Government and the United Nations system as a whole, as well as the efforts under way to end this deplorable situation and fully implement norms and principles on the rights of the child and on their protection, we must nevertheless recognize that, at the time, the response of the United Nations, the international community and donor countries did not meet our expectations. Reasons having to do with security, inaccessibility and, frankly, a lack of confidence in the capacity and the will of my Government to implement its policies to protect the rights of the child resulted in the United Nations being very late in providing support to my Government with regard to formulating appropriate policies to protect children in armed conflict and implementing initiatives, particularly outreach initiatives and those aimed at raising awareness.

Nevertheless — pursuant to the relevant provisions of resolution 1261 (1999) of 25 August 1999, in which the Security Council called upon States and the relevant parts of the United Nations system to intensify their efforts to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict — I would like to reaffirm to the Council that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has ended the enlistment of children in the Congolese armed forces. That is in contrast to the behaviour of the armed groups that hold sway in occupied provinces, which continue to employ child soldiers in the theatre of military operations. A process of demobilization for child soldiers is now taking place under the supervision of BUNADER and UNICEF. However, the future of those soldiers continues to be of major concern and to pose an immense problem.

When one takes into account the fact that serious acts of banditry, particularly in Kinshasa, are being carried out by armed young people, one has to wonder about the wisdom of launching these young people into the world without any financial incentives or viable possibilities to reintegrate into society, especially as we are dealing with young people in their prime who know how to handle weapons. This phenomenon represents a time bomb for the entire Congolese society, as well as a real problem that the United Nations is tackling very timidly and one that the Government alone cannot address due to a lack of funds. It is important that steps be taken not only immediately but also through the implementation of chapter VI of the comprehensive, inclusive agreement on the transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, relating to the training of our national army.

We must all take concrete action very quickly. Paragraph 55 of the report of the Secretary-General under consideration (S/2002/1299) mentions a commitment by the World Bank and donor countries to support a regional multi-country demobilization and reintegration programme for the entire Great Lakes region. To us, such a commitment still seems to be a long way off.

Last Thursday, France made 1 million euros available to the United Nations Development Programme. Of that amount, 200,000 euros are immediately available for a programme to return to civilian life foreign ex-combatants located in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. France's contribution, following a contribution of 2 million euros to the funds of the World Bank, gives France the leading rank in support for the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration programme of United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). That will greatly assist the return of foreign ex-combatants — including the child soldiers among them — to their countries of origin and their families and homes.

Furthermore, implementing the relevant provisions of resolutions 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001), MONUC has established child protection units. But given the proliferation of armed groups and their dispersion, and given the size of our national territory, one might question their effectiveness and advocate a substantial increase in the number of their personnel within MONUC so that they can be more effective.

The international community is also called on to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the implementation by the Government and the future transition authorities of the relevant recommendations made by the delegates to the inter-Congolese dialogue.

The war of aggression that has raged in my country for four years now, in violation of the United Nations Charter, has not only given rise to the phenomenon of child soldiers, whose forced recruitment continues in the occupied provinces. For children, this war has brought a succession of miseries, of which they are the first victims. Thousands of them survive, marginalized throughout the country, cut off from society and their own families, living in the streets alone or in groups, sexually exploited and abused, breaking the law, without protection or future.

This war of aggression has also led to the forced, brutal and tragic displacement of populations within the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has forced many Congolese into exile in neighbouring countries. It has also encouraged all kinds of violations of fundamental human rights, particularly those related to the physical integrity of women and children.

My delegation wishes to express my Government's concern at the events currently taking place in the east, in Uvira, and further north, in Beni, Mambasa, Bunia, Kilo, Mongwalu and Mahagi. A major humanitarian crisis has been created, especially due to the forced displacement of thousands of people, which has been confirmed by MONUC. Purely commercial reasons are at the base of this upsurge in tension, in which, through opposing Congolese factions, Ugandan generals and Rwandan businessmen equally attempt to gain control of the goldmines of Kilo-Moto and of the Mongwalu area.

My Government denounces the delaying tactics employed by Rwanda and Uganda, as well as their manoeuvring to prolong the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those two countries, after signing agreements with my country, were quick to incite new rebellions and create new warlords. Uganda created the Union des patriotes congolais (UPC) — headed by Mr. Thomas Lubanga, a notorious hostage-taker and known criminal — which is not a signatory of the Pretoria Agreement. For its part, Rwanda has given the present Governor of Nord-Kivu, Mr. Serufuli, responsibility for leading a militia of almost 20,000 men, essentially Hutus released from the prisons of Rwanda by the Kigali Government, with the mission of sowing terror, looting and committing massacres among the civilian population.

My Government expresses its dismay at information reporting widespread cases of looting and mass rape of women and girls and summary and extrajudicial executions perpetrated by the Mouvement pour le liberation du Congo (MLC) and its ally, the Rassemblement congolais pour la democratie-National (RCD-N), as well as by the UPC.

My Government is scandalized by the discovery of mass graves in Mambasa, where violent clashes continue between, on the one side, the troops of the Rassemblement congolais pour la democratie —

Mouvement de libération (RCD-ML) and on the other, the troops of the RCD-N, in coalition with the MLC.

My Government is shocked at the allegations made by representatives of the Catholic Church and non-governmental organizations for the defence of human rights alleging acts of cannibalism by soldiers of the MLC and the RCD-N, principally and specifically targeting pygmy populations and the Nande people. My Government awaits the conclusions of the investigation carried out by the United Nations and hopes that those conclusions will be made public, so that light will be shed on that indescribable act of terror and those dreadful events. If that unimaginable barbaric savagery turns out to be true, my Government would ask the Security Council to take against the alleged perpetrators, authors and those responsible all measures authorized under the Charter of the United Nations in order to stop those atrocities and crimes, which now fall within the purview of the International Criminal Court.

In conclusion, my Government appeals to all our international, regional and subregional partners to help us carry out our programme to promote and to protect the rights of children. There is an urgent need to renew international commitments to make children a priority, so that we do not waste the most precious human resource in the world and to build a stable and productive society. The future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo lies in the well-being of its children. Investing in children today will ensure peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development for present and future generations.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for his kind words addressed to my country.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Burundi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): My delegation is sincerely pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the Security Council for the first time since you assumed your new duties. We wish you every success in your mission. How fortunate that the first public meeting of the Council over which you are presiding is dedicated to the situation of children in armed conflicts, a subject of utmost importance and one to which France has always given special attention. I also congratulate the new members of the Security Council and wish them every success in their noble task.

I would like to welcome the presence among us of our brother Mr. Olara Otunnu, who has made such great efforts to raise the awareness of the international community and mobilize it to assist children, whose innocence is brutalized by the belligerents of the conflicts currently raging throughout the world.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299) before us is extremely clear on the suffering of children in conflicts and on the proposed approaches for a solution, especially through the implementation of international conventions that already exist or are in the process of being adopted.

Burundi is mentioned in the report, in which the principal belligerents — the Government, the rebels of the Front pour la défense de la démocratie (FDD) and of the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu/Forces nationales pour la libération (PALIPEHUTU/FNL) — are accused of using child soldiers in their conflict.

I should like to recall here that the war that has been raging in Burundi since 1993 has particularly affected the vulnerable populations, including children. They are the ones who suffer most from diseases related to the poor hygiene and other negative conditions prevailing in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees. They also suffer most from poor nutrition and food shortages, the destruction or closing of schools, health clinics and hospitals, and from the many horrors of war. The phenomenon of street children in urban areas — in Burundi and elsewhere — is a shocking reality of civil war in our States.

The task of rehabilitating children therefore is a multidimensional one, as indicated by international norms to protect children in situations of conflict.

In Burundi, there is, however, a glimmer of hope for the entire population, and in particular for children. That hope was kindled by the signing of the Arusha Peace Agreement in August 2000 and, more recently, by the signing of a ceasefire between the Transitional Government and the three armed factions. We hope that the armed group that has remained outside of this peace process — the PALIPEHUTU/FNL — will soon join it.

The Arusha Peace Agreement makes explicit reference to the rehabilitation of the educational and health sectors for the benefit of children, and there are

plans to introduce peace education and tolerance programmes into school curricula.

With respect to child soldiers, the Peace Agreement, as well as the ceasefire agreement signed on 2 December 2002 at Arusha with the FDD armed group, both define the ceasefire as, inter alia, the cessation of all acts of violence against the population as well as an end to the use of child soldiers and to sexual violence.

The ceasefire agreement also specified in the annex — which is an integral part of the agreement — that the question of child soldiers is one of the technical issues still to be negotiated between the Government and the FDD, and that the Government and the rebel groups must agree on a common solution. Such a solution can be found in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programme, which is the most important part of the ceasefire agreement, and for which, thankfully, the international community has planned substantial funding, within the framework of a possible United Nations peacekeeping mission in Burundi.

As concerns the Government, we recognize the existence of child soldiers recruited on a voluntary basis due to a lack of other options following unsuccessful primary schooling. In 1989 we signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and then, in 2001, the Optional Protocol to that Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Ratification proceedings are under way. We have already set up, jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund, a programme for the demobilization of child soldiers, and a census of these children is under way.

However, with respect to the armed groups, the situation is quite distressing, because, following the signing of the ceasefire agreement on 2 December 2002, the FDD rebels carried out a forced mass recruitment of young schoolchildren and students, promising them the world, including military ranks and large sums of money, which the international community was to give them if some of them were to be demobilized some day. This attitude should be condemned by the Security Council, because it is cynical, anachronistic and constitutes a violation of the ceasefire and of the agreed truce.

Let me recall here that the Burundian armed groups are notorious for the horrific killing of children in boarding schools — the most infamous being the burning alive in 1993 of dozens of Kibimba Normal School students, as well as the slaughter of young seminarians in Buta in 1996, who were killed in cold blood because they refused to group themselves by ethnicity, as had been ordered by the FDD rebel execution squad. The rebels also have excelled in the destruction of schools and hospitals, as well as in the kidnapping of schoolchildren and students under the age of 15, with the goal of recruiting them or making them carry plundered goods. As the report points out, these actions are true war crimes, which, thankfully, the International Criminal Court plans to prosecute.

The challenge raised by the situation of children in the Burundian conflict can be taken up now that the combatants seem to want to put an end to the war. Once the war has ended, the national and international community will be able to reweave the physical, social and moral fabric of the country. Children will once again be able to smile and to live a full and happy life with their parents — who themselves will welcome the chance to rebuild their lives in a reconciled nation. We ask the international community and the Security Council in particular to continue to help Burundi, so that it may continue forward on the path to peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Ms. Saiga (Japan): As all of us here will acknowledge with regret, the majority of victims and casualties in recent conflicts have been civilians, of whom the most vulnerable are children. Children are the most negatively affected by armed conflicts, as they are the victims of attacks, landmines and violence on the one hand, while being exploited as child soldiers on the other. We all bear responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of children, who are the basis of the future development of any society. It is therefore commendable that the Security Council has regularly been taking up this important subject since 1998.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Yoriko Kawaguchi, is advocating what is referred to as the "consolidation of peace", which is a new pillar of our foreign policy. This consolidation of peace includes a feature under which Japan would provide early support to local communities, before the achievement of any formal peace agreement. This initiative not only provides local people with assistance at a crucial time

of need, but also gives critical momentum to the peace process by enabling them to enjoy the dividends of peace. That approach is more proactive than our conventional approach, which had focused on rehabilitation and the reconstruction of a country after the signing of a peace accord. Specifically, in order to ensure that children enjoy those dividends of peace, Japan has made a variety of concrete efforts to protect and assist children in situations of armed conflict. One example is the "Back to School" campaign in Afghanistan, which the United Nations Children's Fund has been advancing, with the financial support of Japan. Other examples of Japan's efforts in this area are school reconstruction and education reactivation in Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Côte d'Ivoire; assistance to internally displaced children in Somalia; and landmine awareness education in Afghanistan, Angola and the Sudan, to name just a few countries.

I should like, on behalf of the Japanese Government, to make a number of comments regarding the United Nations work on children and armed conflict.

First, we would like to express our appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his activities, including field visits to countries caught in or recovering from armed conflict, since such visits can contribute to the promotion of awareness of the importance of the protection of children in situations of armed conflict, who need special attention for their survival. The annex to the most recent report of the Secretary-General includes a list of certain parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use child soldiers. It is not sufficient simply to denounce those who are responsible, but every possible effort — for example, awareness raising and eradicating the culture of impunity — must be made to bring such practices to an end.

Secondly, a number of United Nations agencies have been actively involved in the issue of children and armed conflict, including the Office of the Special Representative, field-based implementing agencies and various departments at Headquarters. In order for such agencies to use the limited resources available in an effective and efficient manner, inter-agency coordination and periodic review and streamlining of their activities are of great importance. Japan therefore welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 57/190, entitled "Rights of the child", which calls for a comprehensive assessment of the response of the United Nations system to the issue of children and armed conflict. It is hoped that concrete and bold ideas for the reform of United Nations activities in this area will be submitted, based upon achievements to date and changing needs on the ground.

Thirdly, Japan is pleased that the Security Council has been regularly addressing the subject of children and armed conflict, as well as those of the protection of civilians in armed conflict and women, peace and security, as the issue of the protection of civilians, including women and children, is part and parcel of the maintenance of international peace and security. As my Government has frequently pointed out, however, the three subjects are intricately intertwined and thus should be addressed in an integrated manner. For instance, those three issues might well be addressed under a single agenda item.

In conclusion, I am convinced that under your leadership, Mr. President, a resolution will be adopted that contributes to the improvement of the situation of children suffering as a result of conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Namibia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): Permit me at the outset, Sir, to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing see you presiding over the work of the Security Council this month, and to thank you for having convened this very important meeting. I would also like to take this opportunity to warmly congratulate the new members of the Council and to pledge my delegation's full support to them. Allow me also to pay tribute to the outgoing members of the Council for the excellent manner in which they participated in the Council's work over the past two years.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement this morning and for his thought-provoking report, which reviews activities and progress made in the protection of children affected by situations of armed conflict. This report goes a step further than a mere review of the situation; it provides a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of relevant international obligations, and highlights the plight of children in conflicts that are not on the agenda of the Security

Council. We see this step as a positive development in our efforts to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

I wish to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, as well as Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, for the information that they provided today. Their tireless work and actions are clear testimony of their strong and unwavering commitment to protect children everywhere.

It is encouraging to note from the report that impressive gains have been made in codifying international norms and standards for the protection and well-being of children. My delegation applauds this progress, since, as has been stated many times by the Council, the impact of conflict on children has severe implications, not only for peace and security, but also for socio-economic development. These positive developments should be built upon by the international community to ensure that children are forever protected against the consequences of war.

Further efforts should be made to ensure that the standards according to which children are treated are implemented on the ground, and that permanent monitoring and reporting mechanisms are created in order to identify and adopt measures against violations. As responsible members of the international community, we must move with a great sense of urgency — and move beyond mere words. We must take concrete actions to practise what we preach. And we must not forget the children that are today suffering under foreign occupation and domination.

Here, I speak of the children of Palestine and the children of Western Sahara. We must summon the necessary courage and political will to bring the suffering of those children to an end by ensuring that their countries attain their inalienable right to self-determination. The Security Council has a Charter responsibility in that regard.

For its part, Namibia will continue to contribute to all efforts aimed at protecting future generations from the evils of armed conflict. It is for those reasons that Namibia was at the forefront in getting the Security Council involved in addressing the plight of children in armed conflict during our tenure in the Council in 1999 and 2000. We therefore strongly supported resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1314 (2000), which were adopted during that period. Resolution 1261 (1999), in particular, heightened international attention with regard to this issue, which resulted in the progress that we are seeing today.

Furthermore, we believe that the entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child will have a profound impact that will contribute to achieving this goal. The provisions of the Optional Protocol will result in a sharp decrease in the number of young children recruited for war, and the Rome Statute will be a strong deterrent to war crimes such as sexual violence against children. Namibia strongly supports both instruments and will work tirelessly to ensure that their provisions are fully implemented.

Other specific concerns of my delegation are the disproportionate impact of conflicts on girls and the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS. In many instances, the trauma of girls is compounded when they are infected with deadly diseases through sexual violence during times of war and peace. My delegation therefore urges the Security Council to continue to devote special attention to the needs of girls and to the effects of HIV/AIDS.

Before I conclude, I wish to make an observation. The report before us (S/2002/1299), in paragraph 55, mentions Namibia together with several other countries where the World Bank and other donors have committed themselves to give priority to the unconditional and urgent demobilization of child soldiers in a Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme for the Greater Great Lakes Region. The language of the paragraph, as it stands, could be misinterpreted to mean that Namibia also has child soldiers to be demobilized, although that is not directly stated. I should like to make it very clear that Namibia does not have or recruit child soldiers, because that is against the supreme law of our land, the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia.

Finally, my delegation urges the Council to act expeditiously on the information provided to it in the report under discussion. The paramount consideration should be that more needs to be done to protect children from the scourge of war.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ecuador. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to speak before you, Sir, representative of a friendly country such as France. At the same time, I should like to express my delegation's congratulations to the former President of the Council, the representative of Colombia, on his excellent work during his tenure. I should also like to congratulate the representatives of Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain, who have just joined the Council.

First of all, I should like to express Ecuador's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his new and important report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299), in which he presents an account of activities undertaken and progress achieved related to that crucial issue during the period of the report. We express our congratulations to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on his valuable initiatives and on the commitments reached in various countries in order to ensure the protection and well-being of children during and after conflicts, as well as compliance with obligations arising from international law. We encourage the Special Representative to continue to undertake all necessary efforts, in coordination with the competent bodies, to achieve increasingly significant results and commitments.

It is also important to highlight — as the Secretary-General did in his report — the adoption by the General Assembly of the document "A world fit for children", annexed to resolution S-27/2, in which the Assembly agreed on a renewed commitment to protect children during armed conflicts, in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law. The Security Council resolutions in that area and effective compliance with them are also important means to contribute to that objective.

Other important advances in that sphere are the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which ensures that the gravest significant crimes for the international community — among which are crimes committed specifically against children — will not go unpunished. The strengthening of international law in that sphere, respect for it and effective application of it are indispensable in order to guarantee the necessary protection for children, especially in the light of the persistence of conflicts of all kinds in various regions of the world. We also welcome the progress that has been made in the incorporation of the issue of the protection of children as an essential component of the work of peacemaking, peace-building and peacekeeping.

One of the saddest and most tragic realities that we see in various parts of the world today is the unspeakable suffering experienced by the innocent and most helpless victims of society — children — as a result of armed conflicts. The report of the Secretary-General describes that intolerable reality, including the risks to which children are exposed as a result of landmines, unexploded ordnance and small arms and light weapons. It also discusses the serious situation of displaced children and the exploitation and abuses of every kind to which children are exposed. Therefore, the international community must accord high priority to the situation through the implementation of better concrete measures to guarantee children's most fundamental rights and to mitigate and prevent the pernicious effects that armed conflicts have on them.

In his report, the Secretary-General also emphasizes the problems related to child soldiers. Nothing is more inhuman and more contrary to the highest values of any society than the fact that, instead of toys, children are forced or permitted to handle instruments of death, that human beings, in the earliest stages of their existence, are dragged into violence, confrontation and destruction. The solution to this problem must, of course, be a United Nations priority.

Ecuador wishes to note the list included in the Secretary-General's report, at the request of the Security Council, of the parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers, in violation of applicable international obligations. This is an important development, through which we no longer speak in general terms concerning the brutal realities that exist in various regions and fully identified areas. Instead, we are identifying specific parties, which will allow us to encourage State and non-State actors involved to alter their behaviour and to adhere to the basic norms of human rights and international humanitarian law.

Although much remains to be done, the progress noted by the Secretary-General in his report on the issue of protecting children in armed conflict, while limited, is praiseworthy. We hope that it will continue and that the necessary efforts and actions will be

stepped up in order to ensure that the world can truly become a place fit for children.

The President (*spoke in French*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the Permanent Observer of Palestine. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, let me express our great satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, preside over our Council. You are a skilful diplomat well known throughout the United Nations. I am pleased to see France, a friendly country, at the helm of the Council.

Although Colombia is no longer a member of the Security Council, I should also like to take this opportunity to convey our thanks and appreciation to the friendly delegation of that country and to Ambassador Valdivieso for his presidency of the Council last month and to wish him every success.

We also thank the former members whose membership lapsed at the end of the year, congratulate the new members and wish them every success.

Over the past 28 months, the children of Palestine have been subject to systematic murderous action by Israel, the occupying Power. During this period, the occupying forces of Israel have committed war crimes and acts of State terrorism, as well as systematic violations of the rights of Palestinian children and of the Palestinian people in general. The occupying forces, both deliberately and through the indiscriminate or excessive use of force, have killed over 650 Palestinian children and wounded thousands more, hundreds of whom have been permanently disabled. Through the use of force, widespread destruction and the collective punishment of the entire Palestinian community, the occupying forces have also inflicted psychological disorders and emotional and social damage on huge numbers of Palestinian children. Above all, Israeli measures and practices have impoverished Palestinian children, who consequently suffer malnutrition and lack of health care, and have halted and destroyed the educational system, leading to the spread of ignorance among future generations.

All of this is occurring against the backdrop of Israel's ongoing occupation of our land for over 34 years, during which the occupying forces have not only oppressed and suppressed the population, but have also practised settler colonialism, one of the worst possible war crimes. The settler colonialism, which denies our people's rights to exist and survive and to national independence, further inhibits the Palestinian child's right to a natural and normal future, such as that enjoyed by any child throughout the world.

To all of this we must add Israel's uprooting of half our population — including children and women — from their lands and homes since 1948 and its prevention of their return for over 50 years. We can thus realize the magnitude of the great humanitarian crisis and plight of Palestinian children at the hands of the leaders and forces of Israel, who are war criminals and the colonialists of the twentieth century.

The efforts of the Security Council in the field of children and armed conflict complement the great work of the General Assembly. In this respect, we express our appreciation for the efforts of the General Assembly in addressing the situation of Palestinian children. The Israeli Chargé d'affaires, with all his well-known arrogance, earlier attacked and criticized the General Assembly resolution concerning Palestinian children. Only four members, whom I shall not name, voted against that resolution. It may be possible in a professional context for the representative of the occupying Power to seek to defend the illegal and illicit behaviour of his country, but it is intolerable and disgusting that he should try to tell Member States what to do and to portray the occupying Power as a State that obeys and observes international law and loves peace.

We welcome the improvement in the Security Council's position concerning the question of children and armed conflict through its acceptance of the legal necessity of addressing the issue of children under foreign occupation. This logically leads to the issue of Palestinian children under Israeli occupation. We also welcome the improvement in the Secretary-General's report in this context and the reference made therein to Palestinian children and their suffering, although the reference inadequately covers all the essential aspects of the issue. The same can be said of the statement made this morning by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, in which he added to the relevant paragraph of the Secretary-General's report another paragraph on the use of suicide bombings in Israel.

Although we do not disagree in principle, we nevertheless do not understand part of the text to that

additional paragraph. More important, we believe that the two paragraphs do not clearly reflect either the situation or its legal aspects, nor do they reflect the tragic situation experienced by Palestinian children for many years now. Nevertheless, this is a beginning that we hope will develop in an appropriate manner, including a visit by the Special Representative to occupied Palestinian lands, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. We convey our welcome to him in advance.

We hope that the Security Council will take the steps needed to provide the necessary protection for Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation, not only in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relevant Optional Protocol but also with the legal commitments emanating from the Fourth Geneva Convention — which must be implemented in all circumstances, as must its Additional Protocols.

The President (spoke in French): The representative of Israel has asked to speak. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Meker (Israel): I regret that I am forced to take the floor again in this debate. We had hoped that this discussion would not turn into an exchange regarding the participation of the observer of the Holy See in conferences, but last but not least the core

[illegible] Israel, a few speakers [illegible] Palestinian observer [illegible] Israel [illegible] Palestinian [illegible] Israel [illegible] Palestinian [illegible] Israel [illegible] Palestinian

two children, aged 14 and 15, it was a deliberate murder of civilians. Israel, the occupying Power, has deliberately murdered civilians through the excessive and indiscriminate use of force.

Fourthly, the representative of Israel claims that the Palestinian side uses its children as human shields. That is very racist, as well as unacceptable. It reflects a sick mentality. We hope that Israel's representatives and leaders will overcome such thinking in the future.

Finally, we once again hope that the international community will truly stand up against the culture of illegal impunity by confronting the war crimes and all other crimes committed by the leaders of Israel as part of the official State policy of successive Israeli Governments, particularly in the last 28 months. We hope such a stance will be taken because it is the only thing that could lend real credibility to the statements of the international community on this issue.

Despite all this, we have not yet lost hope for changing both the attitudes and the Israeli policy and for reaching a just and comprehensive peace in the region, based on two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side.

The President (spoke in French): I now give the floor to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, to respond to comments in brief interventions, given the sensitivity of the issue.

Mr. Otunnu: I have taken very careful note of the extremely important comments and concerns made by members of the Security Council and other Members of the United Nations. I shall be in continuing dialogue with them, and I shall do everything possible to act on the suggestions and proposals which have been made. In this we hope to be the channel to respond to or elaborate on the specific suggestions or proposals. Thank you very much for your interest and engagement and the commitment of the Security Council.

The President (spoke in French): I now give the floor to the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, Mr. Kul Gautam, to respond to comments made in a brief statement, given the sensitivity of the issue.

Mr. Gautam: It is late in the day. So, as you said, as I will try to be brief. This open debate of the Security Council has been enormously encouraging to

us at UNICEF. On behalf of Carol Bellamy, our Executive Director, I would like to thank all Member States that have so generously acknowledged UNICEF's work in the demobilization and reintegration of children in situations of armed conflict in many countries. We will convey your words of appreciation and encouragement and your sense of solidarity to our field staff, who work day in and day out to try to help children in difficult circumstances. I know it will be a tremendous inspiration to them.

I would also like to take this occasion to acknowledge and pay a special tribute to our non-governmental organization partners. There are very few of them left here. But I know that there is a large number of them outside, watching the proceedings of the Council. Their work and collaboration are of tremendous value to the work of the United Nations. We could not be as effective as we are without their passion, support and solidarity.

As many delegations highlighted, prevention is better than cure. A major contribution by UNICEF and our partner organizations to ensure that all children are helped to enjoy childhood to their full potential requires investing in basic services and reaching the Millennium Development Goals, which are very important for the development of children.

We were particularly happy to hear so many delegations referring to the commitment that our leaders made to "A world fit for children". Indeed, if we can implement some of the goals, targets and objectives of "A world fit for children", we will do well for children in difficult circumstances, in armed conflict and otherwise.

Let me mention just two or three specific things that we take to heart. Several delegations reminded us that the illicit traffic in small arms contributes enormously to violence. We share their concerns and hope that there will be a stronger response in that area. We are encouraged by the comments made by many delegations on the need to ensure that the list in the annex to the Secretary-General's report is developed, strengthened, expanded, reviewed and made more of a practical tool. We hope that these statements will be reflected in the Council's resolution, when it is adopted in the next few days. Many delegations made specific suggestions and recommendations for the follow-up to the Secretary-General's report. Austria, speaking on behalf of the Human Security Network, made 10 very specific and concrete proposals. We trust that some of those very specific and pertinent points will be reflected in the draft resolution that the Council is to adopt in the next few days.

The Council's debate today, and the draft resolution that it will soon adopt, will provide powerful encouragement and support for all of us to redouble our efforts to protect children from the barbarity of armed conflict and to help them build, and live in, a more peaceful world — a world that is fit for children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for his statement.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.55 p.m.